

IN HER PLACE: GEOGRAPHIES OF URBAN FEMALE LABOR IN SPANISH
CULTURE (1880-1931)

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation demonstrates how three aesthetic and ideological movements—such as *costumbrismo*, realism, and avant-garde—construct characterizations of urban female workers in turn-of-the-century Spanish literature and culture as symbols of middle-class anxieties and desires as a reaction to experienced social and political instability in turn-of-the-century Spain. *Costumbrismo*, realism, and avant-garde highlight as the main social category from which writers such as Emilia Pardo Bazán, Benito Pérez Galdós, María Martínez Sierra, or Ramón Gómez de la Serna fashioned fictional urban working women's gender and work identities and their trajectories in various narratives. In particular, I claim that in these texts, the working woman's class conflicts with gender in the process of narrative signification, producing a multiplicity of contradictory meanings that expose turn-of-the-century bourgeois anxieties about women's emancipation and working-class unrest.

My analysis of urban female working characters reveals that middle-class representations of working women result from a dominant conceptualization of class and gendered spaces in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Spain. For that reason, my thesis draws a geography of urban female labor through the analysis of the symbolic condensation of class, gender, and space in the cultural representations of urban working women. By doing so, I shed light on the ambivalent cultural location that working women have occupied in cultural representations of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Even though the construction and development of modern Spain could not have taken place without the participation working women's labor, this segment of the population has been "out-of-place" for too long in literary and cultural criticism. It is my hope that

this dissertation will reposition these marginalized characters to their legitimate place in critical discourse.

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INTRODUCTION

We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology.

Edward Soja

No Language is innocent.

Roland Barthes

i. The Myth of *El ángel del hogar* in Turn-of-the-Century Spain:

The political and social predominance of the Spanish bourgeoisie during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reinforced previous religious and philosophical beliefs that associated women with domesticity. As has been sufficiently proven, in the new bourgeois imagination, the male breadwinner had free access to the public space, while the “decent” woman was assigned to the domestic realm. Critic Daphne Spain notes:

[r]emoving production from the home, and simultaneously identifying paid work as something only men did for a ‘family wage,’ guaranteed the creation of predominantly masculine work spaces and predominantly feminine domestic spaces during the nineteenth century. The masculine production of labor was thus removed spatially from the feminine reproduction of labor. (Spain 107)

Popular nineteenth and twentieth-century sayings—many of which were in recent use—reflected the space and role that was assigned to the ideal woman. For example, it was not uncommon to hear: “Las señoritas no tienen más carrera que el matrimonio” (Scanlon 58) or “La mujer honrada, en casa con la pierna quebrada” (Pardo Bazán, “La mujer española” 85). Both popular proverbs communicate the importance of keeping *señoritas*—decent and proper single middle-class women—immobile and enclosed in the domestic space in order to preserve their exchange value—virginity—in the marriage market.

The legal system also strengthened this division between male and female spheres. In 1889, the Spanish Civil Code, issued during the *Restauración* government, socially and legally relegated women subordinate to men (Scanlon 9), reinforcing the doctrine of separate spheres. As feminist geographer Linda McDowell suggests “[t]his binary division [between public and private space] is also deeply implicated in the social production of space, in assumptions about the ‘natural’ and built environments and in the sets of regulations which influence who should occupy which spaces and who should be excluded” (11). Thus, according to this conception of gendered space, men function as the central link between public and private realms, while women occupy only the private space. In this sense, “the belief in a materialistic and dangerous public world provokes in turn the creation of an idealized image of an isolated feminine domestic sphere which can be a timeless spiritual refuge and stable locus outside the turbulent flow of history” (Aldaraca, *Ángel del hogar* 56). In a similar vein, space critic Doreen Massey suggests that “for the new complexities of the geography of social relations to produce fear and anxiety, both personal identity and ‘a place called home’ have had to be conceptualized in a particular way—as singular and bounded” (172). Male freedom and agency to move between home and work allows men to display their masculinity while away from any threat of feminization now confined to and contained in the home.

The figure of the “angel of the hearth and home” symbolized the middle-class ideal of femininity: a virtuous woman who remained in the private realm away from the corrupting and anarchic forces of public spaces and whose life revolved around child rearing, housework, and her submission to the husband. The appropriation and standardization of the myth of the “angel of the hearth and home” by the bourgeoisie did

not only respond to the need to delimit gender boundaries and roles in society, but it also functioned as a way of imagining the middle class as a cohesive and dominant group that cared for the national family. By including the “angel of the hearth and home” within the nation building project, the bourgeoisie established a direct link between ideal femininity, virtue, and Spanish citizenship. Discursively constructed as bearer of the nation, the “angel of the hearth and home” became responsible for “exerting a civilizing influence upon the members of the family within the structure of the Christian home” (Aldaraca *Ángel del hogar* 66). Analogous to the English context described by Nancy Armstrong in her book *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, the definition of the Spanish middle-class woman as the “angel of the hearth and home” served to “enable a coherent idea of the middle class” (63). She became the standard and symbolic representation of the desired new moral order and identity that the rising middle-class desired. By defining itself through qualities of virtue and moral superiority, the middle-class also achieved another political goal: its entrance into part of the ruling class and its differentiation from and supremacy over the lower class. The middle-class woman as “angel of the hearth and home” was a stabilizing force who, as a metaphor of her own class, could give Spain a necessary balance and cohesion.

ii. Dismantling the Myth of Female Domesticity: Working Women as Producers and Consumers

The middle-class’ attempt to secure a division between the domestic and public sphere, as a manifestation of the demarcation of female domesticity and decency, clashed with the everyday life experiences of many women. As Susan Kirkpatrick notes, “the image of woman as a domestic angel began to be formulated in Spanish writing at a time

when the diffusion of bourgeois social forms in Spain's cities had modified the traditional Iberian separation of the sexes and cloistering women" (58). Consequently, the myth of bourgeois femininity appeared when the new configuration of cities gave women access to public spaces. In this sense, such a middle-class myth is "[o]ften more proscriptive than descriptive" (Jagoe 182). The question then emerges: what happened to working-class females who did not have the "luxury" to remain in the domestic sphere but who, from sheer economic necessity, had to venture into the public sphere to work? What can be said about middle-class widows or impoverished bourgeois women whose new economic situation forced them to find a job? How did these women negotiate their roles as urban workers? What was their place?

My dissertation hopes to answer these questions by investigating the representation of urban working women and the spaces they inhabit in Spanish texts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In particular, my dissertation explores how turn-of-the-century authors both intentionally—and sometimes unintentionally—challenged and, at times, reconfigured the ideal of the angel of the hearth and home; within distinct ideological and stylistic parameters these authors contributed to a revision of the textual representation of the working woman. My analysis poses the following questions: what aesthetic and ideological issues shape the representation of urban working women in the spaces they inhabit in different cultural narratives? How do these cultural encodings of working women's mobility destabilize or adhere to bourgeois-dominant discursive formations of "feminine space"? Do working women characters reinvent urban topographies as sites of resistance or/and conformity? And, more

particularly, how are the domestic, work, and leisure spaces constructed in these narratives gendered and classed in relation to the representation of female workers?

I intend to construct a geography of gender and labor, calling attention to the importance of space in the cultural construction of female workers. Additionally, since “[t]he spatial’ . . . can be seen as constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales” (Massey 4), I pay special attention to the different space levels in which the working woman is configured—from her body, the home, the city and the nation to the text itself. In this vein, and following critic Doreen Massey’s statement that “attempts at the stabilization of meaning of [a particular envelope of space-time] are constantly the site of social contest, battles over the power to label space” (5), I contend that the figure of the working woman, both as a producer and consumer with special mobility in the city, destabilizes the turn-of-the-century Spanish middle-class’ division between private and public space. As Deborah Parsons suggests:

By the late nineteenth century, women's access to the metropolis was expanding, both in terms of leisure and employment. The New Woman, the working girl, and the female shopper are all types of female presence associated with the city of modernity. . . . Although this new freedom was limited, and subject to the manipulations of employers and the commodity industry, its importance for emancipation should not be overlooked.

Women's legitimate participation in the city life was an extremely significant divergence from Victorian conventional belief and acquired a great deal of anxious attention from contemporary social commentators.

(43)

Paradoxically, the same social system which fostered modernization and capitalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was encouraging and prescribing the practice of a gendered paradigm of female proper space while creating the economic conditions which forced/encouraged women's entry into the (labor) market and which allowed them to consume leisure commodities.

The prevalence of capitalist production and consumption during the turn of the nineteenth century became a major challenge to the realization of the "angel of the hearth and home" myth: on the one hand, housewives were encouraged to consume for the sake of the family and the nation, thus leaving the domestic sphere and becoming involved in the public economy. As Catherine Jagoe has pointed out "although bourgeois ideologues strove to portray the feminized domestic sphere as outside and opposite to the market world, the two were intertwined in many ways" (88). On the other hand, the increasing participation of women in turn-of-the-century Spanish economy was also motivated by the progressive, although uneven, industrialization of Spain and by a national economic crisis that forced many bourgeois women to work in order to survive (Nash 49). Such was the case of widows, impoverished middle-class women, and many working-women whose mobility in the public and private spaces "pose[d] a threat to a settled patriarchal order" (Massey 11). Indeed, as Patricia E. Johnson explains, female workers' economic independence and free access to various realms of leisure reinforced their social configuration as dangerous embodiments of transgression who did not fit the dominant ideal of femininity (3).

Together with sex workers or 'public' women who were condemned for their sexual depravity, other types of working women who did not work in the sex trade were

also described as immoral and dangerous. The only female worker who attracted less social criticism was the one who opted to work at home in secrecy. Nonetheless, domestic work also proved to be one of the most pernicious practices for many women since they remained isolated—and subsequently unable to unionize—and became, on many occasions, the most exploited sector of female labor. In this instance, the domestic space, instead of symbolizing a safe haven for women, turned into a socially invisible site of labor exploitation based on gender discrimination. Other women workers, such as maids, factory workers, clerks, salesgirls and so on, occupied more ambiguous positions that problematized their inclusion within the “angel of the hearth and home” definition. Their intrusion into the public space either for work or leisure supposedly facilitated their exposure to sexual deviance and excess due to their interaction with and physical proximity to men. Contrary to this faulty assumption, males, in fact, felt free to sexually harass these women who were perceived as ‘loose’—and therefore, as ‘desiring’ sexual intercourse—in the social conceptual maps of the time. The preconception of working women’s excessive sexuality ran parallel to another stereotype that envisioned low-class working women as negligent housewives who abandoned their domestic duties in order to linger in public spaces. Such an idea became even more pervasive when women workers were construed as irresponsible mothers and uncivilized human beings who went against nature since they left their progeny unattended. At the same time, working-class women were also said to bring home the vices and degeneration of the public space to their families and thus risk the mental and physical health of the country’s future labor force. Such sexist and class stereotypes justified the scorn and disciplinary control dominant groups inflicted upon these women, including the state apparatus that created

corrective policies and spaces like hospices (Scanlon 113). The public demonization of workers concealed the drawbacks of a social system that did not supply adequate welfare benefits that would alleviate female workers' poor conditions. In this sense, working women were denied their right to be considered as rightful breadwinners who provided their families with the necessary means for survival, which, in turn, rendered them as a easily-exploited cheap labor force.

The erosion of the boundaries that divided space according to gender was particularly relevant in the urban space. If there was a sociocultural setting truly affected by the progressive establishment of *laissez faire* economy and industrialization in Spain, it was the modern city. As Deborah Parsons states, it is the urban space “where the maelstrom of social, technological and psychological change is felt most keenly” (*Cultural History* 3). Thus, whereas the division of labor remained the same in the Spanish rural areas, the city offered a new changing landscape that opened up new options for women's labor and leisure. Turn-of-the-century Madrid, like other major Spanish cities, “was a city of commerce, rapid social change and class mobility; a city where, in accordance with the new capitalist economy based on exchange value, everything is in circulation” (Labanyi, *Galdós* 3). In the spatial detours or interstices available in such city landscapes, many female workers refigured and relocated their identities through their daily work and leisure. Although the dominant configuration and architectural design of the city often served the interests of those in power, by reconfiguring and rearticulating the urban spaces they occupied, working women built sites and itineraries where they negotiated new identities. Commenting on this idea, Michel de Certeau notes the possibilities that the urban landscape offers for an alternative

redefinition of the subject. In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Certeau perceives the city as “a place of transformations and appropriations [which] permit the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded” (95). In this sense, the city may take different meanings and be perceived as “a place of growing threat and paranoia to men, [and] a place of liberation for women” (Wilson 7). Unlike the rural space, the city became a milieu where women experienced great autonomy and mobility due to the increase in the number of jobs for women, their economic independence, and the new emerging spaces of leisure such as cinemas, theaters, or parks. As Parsons’ book *Streetwalking in the Metropolis* suggests, it is important to emphasize women’s practices and experiences in the urban space (39). Criticism on literary urban geographies has often perceived the male bourgeois *flâneur* as the epitome of the urban explorer-observer, reducing women’s experiences in the city to the domestic realm (Parsons, *Streetwalking* 40) or as mere objects of the male gaze in public spaces (Conor 254). However, there are late nineteenth and early twentieth century expressions of female *flânerie* that I would like to investigate: urban working women also adopted an active role as observers and subjects who created alternative geographic itineraries and identities.

Like many other European countries, industrialization of major Spanish cities such as Madrid or Barcelona was problematic. Massive migrations of rural impoverished workers to the urban industrialized nucleus in search of a job resulted in overcrowded and overpopulated neighborhoods, especially in the periphery. Simultaneously, the terrible labor conditions experienced by the mass of workers—low salaries, lack of labor rights, excessive working hours, etc.—gave way to the formation of a proletarian consciousness which demanded and strove for better work conditions. Although both female and male

workers experienced the advantages and disadvantages of accessing the growing urban labor market, gender and social class strongly shaped women workers' life experience in public and private spaces in comparison to that of their male counterparts: sex, maternity, marriage, female virtue and gendered spaces were variables which determined the life and identity of such women, in many cases to their disadvantage.

iii. Working Women Under Scrutiny: Labor Conditions and Social Prejudices

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Spanish social debate regarding female labor parallels the articulation of the “angel of the hearth and home” as a feminine ideal. Working-class women had been performing necessary jobs since antiquity although unacknowledged. In this regard, Pardo Bazán writes in “La mujer española”: “En mi país, Galicia, se ve a la mujer, encinta o criando, cavar la tierra, segar el maíz y el trigo, pisar el tojo, cortar la hierba para los bueyes. Tan duras labores no levantan protesta alguna entre los profundos teóricos de la escuela de monsieur Prudhomme” (154). The Galician author criticizes the fact that traditional and strenuous work done by working-class women does not threaten the established economic and social bourgeois order since this type of female labor remained invisible and was not a direct threat to the myth of the “angel of the hearth and home”: what middle-class woman living would have aspired to become a farmer in a society where manual labor was still considered degrading?

Furthermore, working-class women's access to different public spaces, especially when at work, facilitated the construction of working-class women as the counterexample to decent and proper femininity in the bourgeois collective imagination. Indeed, “[e]l trabajo fuera de casa de la mujer era considerado en esta época como nocivo para ella

misma y para la sociedad, tanto por entrar en contradicción con los diferentes roles asignados al hombre y a la mujer, como por ser causante directo del paro, la baja de salarios y la prostitución (Otero Carvajal qtd. in Cabrera Pérez 211). If proper femininity was defined as idle and contained in the domestic realm, working women were deemed indecent and morally loose as already noted.

When the number of women working in factories rose by the turn of the nineteenth century, female labor became more visible in society (Díaz Sanchez qtd. in Cabrera Pérez 27). Simultaneously, the slow but progressive access of middle-class women to the labor market—driven by economic need or influenced by “threatening” feminist trends from abroad—also contributed to increase the public debate on female work. At this time, female labor became a common topic in essays, treatises, articles, and talks for both its supporters and detractors. The most conservative sectors of society, including the Catholic Church, advocated traditional views of women’s role as *ángel del hogar* (“angel of the hearth and home”). They argued that women—including members of the working-class—would like to penetrate the public sphere and work because they were “frivolous” and desired to spend their money on capricious commodities and vices (Tusquets qtd. in Nash 46).

A woman’s salary in the home undermined the basic patriarchal structure of the family since the husband was no longer the only one contributing to the family income. Now, an economically empowered wife—figured as the breadwinner—could occupy the same position of authority in the home as the husband, refuting “la dignidad del marido” and causing in the man “la depresión moral que le impide triunfar en la vida” (Nash 45). According to such perception, the configuration of men as the only breadwinners of the

family unit determined their masculinity. When women subverted such order by performing jobs, they were responsible for the emasculation of their husbands.

As the number of working women increased and social realities changed in spite of reactionary ideologies, traditional perspectives on female labor softened and agreed that women could work only to help her family when in extreme economic need (Nash 45). More liberal sectors of Spanish society supported women's remunerated work on the basis of providing their independence from men, self-determination, and a way of making a respectable living. (Nash 47). Surprisingly, male workers' associations criticized female labor for being a threat to their jobs and the reason why labor power decreased in value (Nash 54). According to an 1883 *Comisión de Reformas Sociales*—Comission of Social Reforms— survey on female labor, working-class women's wages were essential for the economic subsistence of themselves and their families (Nash 49, Cabrera Pérez 83). Moreover, the rise in the cost of living during the turn of the century forced many women of the middle and the lower-middle classes to enter the public space in search of a job (Nash 49).

Along these lines, the work conditions and characteristics of the jobs available to women neither enticed nor encouraged a women's desire to work. For instance, domestic service, one of the jobs most often performed by urban Spanish women at this time (Cabrera Pérez 83), offered low salaries, very long working days, and lack of freedom (Scanlon 82), in addition to the risk of sexual harassment from male employers or other male servants. Furthermore, their isolation from other domestic workers contributed to their lack of unionization and demand for government regulations to protect them from being exploited or fired without proper justification. Many women preferred to work at

factories since the salaries were somewhat better, and at least they could enjoy “mayor compañerismo e independencia que el servicio doméstico” (Scanlon 85). Factory working women also had better social benefits than female workers in different trades, although only as a result of good organizational skills and years of struggle (Capel Martínez, “Life and Work” 145). However, factory work was far from being ideal as Capel Martínez discusses in her article “Life and Work in the Tobacco Factories.” Forced to follow strict schedules, their work was not exempt from drawbacks and dangers. For instance, it was not uncommon for a *cigarrera* (“cigar maker”) to not receive her wages at the end of the day if her manager considered that the cigars were not properly made—a common rebuke considering the insufficient material used to make the cigars (Scanlon 86). Also, writer Carmen de Burgos notes how the toxic dust from the tobacco leaves produced serious skin and respiratory problems for the *cigarreras* (*Mujer moderna* 110). Flower makers did not enjoy better work conditions than *cigarreras*. In *La mujer moderna y sus derechos* (1927), de Burgos explains how flower makers suffered intoxication from arsenic found in the paint used to dye artificial flowers. Additionally, lack of hygienic conditions and long hours of work also contributed to women’s exploitation as cheap labor.

Most of the working women had to cope with a double-work load since after finishing their long-hour shifts at work, they were also expected to continue domestic labor at home. Male workers assumed housework to be a female task as their own testimony suggests: “Comprendo que la mujer soltera trabaje; pero la mujer casada debe estar perenne en su casa para atender a las necesidades de su familia, porque en otro caso tiene uno que llevar el pantalón roto” (qtd. in Scanlon 81). In fact, male workers “querían

liberar a la mujer de la explotación burguesa en la fábrica tan sólo para hacer de ella una esclava doméstica” (Scanlon 82). Class and gender harmed working-class female workers who worked long hours in low-paid jobs and still had to “serve” men in the domestic realm.

Generally, government laws and codes hoping to protect women did not have the desired effect. Sometimes such laws seemed aimed at removing women from the public space and eliminating their competition with men (Cabrera Pérez 80, de Burgos 110) or intended to “protect” their virtue (Scanlon 89). Such laws prohibited women from performing jobs opposed to their gender. For example, a law issued on March 13, 1900 banned women from working at printers’ workshops where immoral material was published (Scanlon 89). Because so many women worked just to make a living, they often ended up performing the same jobs illegally, for lower salaries, which rendered them even easier victims of labor exploitation.

Some laws, however, had a positive impact on the regulation of female labor. For example, article number 9 of the March 13, 1900 law established that women’s positions had to be reserved for them three weeks after giving birth. It also stipulated that breastfeeding women had the right to stop working for an hour a day to feed their babies. A February 27, 1912 law, called *La ley de la silla* (“The law of the chair”), demanded that industrial and store patrons provide a chair for female workers when they were not required to be standing at work.

iv. Articulating Middle-Class Anxieties and Desires: Working Women's Representation in Context

In general, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a period of political and social change and tensions in Spain in which cultural and geographical barriers impeded the country's modernization until the second half of the twentieth century (Tortella 8). Historian Nicolás Sánchez Albornoz divides the process of Spain's modernization into two periods, one ranging from 1830 until the end of the nineteenth century, and the second from the early twentieth century to 1930 (4-5). While the lack of technological innovation, slow demographic growth, constant budget deficits and a system of tariff protection hindered the industrial modernization of the country during the first stage, the second stage witnessed greater industrial expansion thanks to the importation of foreign technology and a growing labor force (Tortella 300).

Throughout the turn of the century Spain remained a predominantly traditional agrarian country with slow and discontinuous economic advances. By the end of the nineteenth century, two thirds of the labor force was concentrated in rural communities (Tortella 8). Spain's slow modernization did not take place until the early decades of the twentieth century, and it was accompanied by regional industrial disparities. While the Basque Country and Catalonia were highly industrialized, other regions such as Castile suffered further ruralization (Sánchez Albornoz 7). Spanish public debt and constant state budget crises supported by "an unstable political system and an outdated social structure" (Tortella 149) definitely contributed to the slow process of modernization. As Raymond Carr explains, the modernization of Spain during the turn of the century "was uneven, a conjunction of changes and resistance to change" in which "traditional structures and

attitudes” coexisted with new economic and social ideas (430). Such confluence of the new and the old set the grounds for a period of social conflict and instability.

The Restoration (1875-1923) and the ensuing military dictatorship (1923-1930) frame a period of ongoing tensions and changes in which the old and the modern coalesce in the social fabric. During the reign of Isabel I, a succession of different ideological parties in power finally yielded to the 1868 bourgeois revolution. The reactionary tendency of Isabel’s government during the last period of her rule raised the discontent and disapproval of a sector of society who saw their rights and interests undermined. The revolution gave way to a liberal government, which secured bourgeois rights such as freedom of speech and religious freedom. However, the prospect of a liberal state democracy did not take place and a series of different governments—even military regimes—followed one another in a short period of time. The instability provoked by the lack of political and ideological consensus among the ruling class was reinforced by other factors such as the Cuban war of independence (*Guerra de los Diez Años*) from 1868 to 1878 and the subsequent 1898 “*desastre*,” or the loss of the Spanish colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. The 1873-4 *Cantonal* Revolution, an insurgent movement aimed to divide the State into independent regions, also contributed to the country’s political and social uncertainty. The emergence and consolidation of proletarian movements during these years eventually caused the adoption of a more conservative middle-class that joined the traditional hegemonic sectors of Spanish society like the monarchy and the Church (Tuñón de Lara 201). It is not surprising that in the year 1874, after a short-lived republic, monarchist Antonio Cánovas del Castillo facilitated the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy and the establishment of the *turno pácifico*, a type

of government in which the conservative and liberal parties, led by Cánovas and Sagasta respectively, would alternate in power.

During the final decades of the nineteenth century, the economy was characterized by an increase in foreign investments in industries, high expenditure to defray the colonial war, and the lack of modernization of the agricultural sector. In particular, the government's neglect of the rural areas contributed to the spread of anarchism among the mass of impoverished peasants who worked under the despotic rule of landowners. In the city, the ideological and political influence of the First International on the working class Spanish consciousness was crucial for the development and enactment of their rights (Tuñón de Lara 225-6). Thanks to the work done by Marx's brother-in-law, Paul Lafarge, in translating key Marxist texts and distributing them in Spain during the early 1870s (Tuñón de Lara 225), a new perception about the inequalities of the socioeconomic structuring of Spanish society and a desire for change appeared among the working classes. After the strong repression suffered by workers' associations during the first years of the Restoration, the 1880s witnessed the progressive and effective association of several workers' organizations such as the *Federación Madrileña de la Internacional* ("Madrilenian Federation of the International"), the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE)—"Spanish Socialist Workers' Party"—and the anarchist *Federación de Trabajadores de la Región Española* ("Workers' Federation of the Spanish Region"). From this time on, the new urban proletariat embraced both socialism and anarchism, and anarchist terrorist acts began to take place in cities like Madrid and Barcelona. Additionally, workers' riots, public demonstrations, and strikes multiplied and continued throughout the following decades. Confronted with social unrest, the wealthy sectors of

society, including the recently empowered middle class, perceived workers' demands and demonstrations as an imminent threat to the economic and social status quo. As Tuñón de Lara mentions, such fear of the working class produced a "psicosis" (226) among the dominant classes at the turn of the century.

Whereas the *turno pacífico* offered a certain political stability that allowed the Spanish economic market to develop, it did not eliminate many political and social tensions because of fissures within the government system. Electoral fraud was common at this time, and the Spanish defeat in the Cuban war and the loss of its colonies remained in the social imagination as a sign of Spain's failure to keep its status as a powerful, colonizing empire. In fact, a group of intellectuals known as the *regeneracionistas* argued for the need to regenerate Spain and solve its problems by bringing in an authoritative figure who could rule the nation with an iron fist. The desire of such intellectuals like Joaquín Costa or Miguel de Unamuno to see a *cirujano de hierro* ("a surgeon of iron") finally materialized in the dictators Miguel Primo de Rivera and Francisco Franco.

To recover its previous political and military splendor, the Spanish government set forth another colonizing enterprise in Morocco, which would stir public discontent (Carr 517). Unfair recruitment practices for the Moroccan conflict meant the forceful enrolment of working-class men who could not pay the abstention fee.¹ Such unpopular imposition on the politically aware working-class coupled with the high rate of casualties amongst soldiers provoked violent public manifestations and riots such as the famous *Semana Trágica* (tragic week) in Barcelona (1909) in which demonstrators were brutally repressed, which resulted in dozens of deaths.

¹ Although military service was compulsory, those who could pay an abstention fee were exempt from it and from being recruited to fight in Morocco. As Sebastian Balfour points out, while most middle-class families paid such a fee, working class men could not afford it (19).

The rising instability of the political and social landscape would highlight the growing decline and deterioration of the *turno pacífico* political system in the ensuing years. During the First World War, Spain remained neutral, which afforded a fast and ephemeral recovery for the Spanish economy. As a provider of goods for the European countries involved in the war, the industrial bourgeoisie and landowners accumulated mass benefits; whereas the urban working class enjoyed better but still insufficient salaries. The escalating prices of basic goods and the lack of investment in economic infrastructure gave way to an economic crisis which left thousands of workers unemployed. Under such circumstances, working class unrest continued, and in 1917 two main union associations, the socialist UGT (*Unión General de Trabajadores*) and the anarchist CNT (*Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores*) organized a national strike. Further revolutionary strikes followed during the post-war crisis (1919-1923) sparked by the drop of prices of national manufactured products and increasing rural and urban unemployment (Carr 509). Fearing an imitation of the Russian revolution in Spain, the government, with the support of the conservative classes (Tortella 237), relied on the army to repress strikers and imprison leaders, amongst whom were members of parliament such as Francisco Largo Caballero who would later play a major role in the establishment of the Second Republic in 1931. Another event that added to social and political discontent was the “*Desastre de Annual*,” the massacre of thousands of Spanish soldiers in Morocco in 1921. If public opinion was already opposed to such a colonial project from the start, the defeat of the Spanish army by Moroccan caused a change in government (Carr 521-2).

While in European countries such as Italy, Germany, or Portugal unstable democratic governments were substituted by fascist dictatorships, in Spain, as a result of the ongoing political and social instability, different sectors of society acquired a sense of distrust in the efficiency of a government ruled by political parties. Thus, with the approval of King Alfonso XIII, the industrial bourgeoisie and some intellectuals, a coup d'état led by general Miguel Primo de Rivera established a military dictatorship from 1923 to 1930. For Carr, however, Primo de Rivera's rise to power actually interrupted the transition from an oligarchy system promoted by the *turno pacífico* to a democratic Spain advocated by advanced liberal politicians (523).

During this time, under a dictatorial regime, the urban Spanish economy experienced a short period of expansion thanks to the state investment in infrastructures and national enterprises. As under previous rulers, rural areas remained neglected from the rapid process of modernization, and landowner systems prevailed, and kept many farmers at the brink of starvation. Migratory movements from the countryside to the cities rose during these years. In order to avoid workers' unrest and discontent, the government created a series of social measures such as retirement subsidies, state-provided housing, and maternity leave for women workers. The hope for a *cirujano de hierro* who would finally solve Spain's problems soon came to an end, however, when Primo de Rivera's authoritarian regime failed to restore a democratic government and further centralized the state economy, which resulted in the dissatisfaction of the Catalan bourgeoisie. Moreover, the Moroccan conflict had not been properly solved, and the press contributed to the increasing unpopularity of the regime. Primo de Rivera's autarchic economy based on oligopolies lacking a proper fiscal system was unable to withstand the world economic

crisis of 1929, this threw the country in its own economic crisis and setting the path for the end of Primo de Rivera's government one year later.

Along with middle-class anxieties about the uncontrollable and revolutionary working-class, the woman question also proved to be a source of unease and concern for the dominant classes. As Andreas Huyssen writes "[i]n the age of nascent socialism and the first major women's movement in Europe, the masses knocking at the gate were also women, knocking at the gate of a male-dominated culture" (47). In Spain, although the formation of the first feminist associations would not take place until the second decade of the twentieth century, the effects of feminist struggles in other Western countries did provoke a social debate on the woman question by the end of the nineteenth century. The belated but progressive modernization of the country, especially after the economic boom from 1876-86, resulted in the incorporation of women into the market as producers and/or consumers. In a society in constant transformation, now based on an economy of capitalist speculation, women's unstable position in society became a source of preoccupation for the dominant classes who saw the growing difficulties in materializing the myth of the "angel of the hearth and home." As Huyssen remarks, "[i]n the late nineteenth century, a specific traditional male image of woman served as a receptacle of all kinds of projections, displaced fears, and anxieties (both personal and political), which were brought about by modernization and the new social conflicts" (Huyssen 52). Furthermore, bourgeois imagination associated woman with the revolting masses as a result of "a fear of nature out of control, a fear of the unconscious, of sexuality, of the loss of identity and stable ego boundaries in the mass" (Huyssen 52). Therefore, I contend that the figure of the modern urban working woman, as a public figure and as

producer and consumer, emerges as an emblematic cultural construction in which the Spanish middle-class sublimated its desires, anxieties and fears at a time of great social and economic instability.

In *Body Works* Peter Brooks claims that the nineteenth-century realist novel configured female characters' bodies as "the site on which the aspirations, anxieties and contradictions of a whole society are played out" (33). Indeed I agree that in the Spanish case the female body was configured as the receptacle of social interests, desires and fears of a particular social class—the recently empowered Spanish bourgeoisie—which was invested in relations of class and gender domination, owned the means of cultural production and whose social identity had to be constantly reaffirmed through class differentiation. Working women's representation therefore was the product of bourgeois self-doubt, fear of social disintegration and class conflict.

In this sense, the category of class is central to the understanding of bourgeois conceptualizations of women, and in particular, of working-class women. Without taking class into account, we run the risk of losing track of the contradictions of the bourgeois dominant discourse on class and gender. Indeed, as mentioned before, the bourgeois ideal of the angel of the hearth and home was defined in opposition to other women who did not conform to this type of femininity. As Catherine Jagoe states:

The contradictions of Victorian gender ideology can be seen also in the notions of class on which it rested, for although its promoters adopted a language which posited woman and the eternal feminine as a universal, timeless, classless entity, they attributed the fundamental quality of the angel, namely her asexual purity, only to the middle class. The same

discourse which desexualized the women of the middle class
hypersexualized working-class women, marking them as ‘naturally’
promiscuous, unrestrainedly passionate, and therefore sinful. (40)

Class, indeed, is central to the cultural representation of female labor in turn-of-the-century Spain. With this in mind, my project reveals that *costumbrismo*, realism, and avant-garde use class as the main social category to determine fictional urban working women’s gender and work identities and their (un)successful trajectory in various narratives. In particular, I contend that in these texts, the working woman’s class conflicts with gender in the process of narrative signification, producing a multiplicity of contradictory meanings that expose turn-of-the-century bourgeois anxieties. Thus, while I argue that the figure of the modern urban working woman, as producer and consumer, encapsulates middle-class desires, anxieties and fears, her social class origins will condition the representation of her trajectory in the narrative: the female character’s working or middle-class origins determines her experience of work, public and domestic spaces, sexuality and her final destiny in the plot.

At the same time, social class, understood as “the relation through which one social group may come to dominate the lives and livelihoods of another” (Hitchcock 23), is also paramount to my study in uncovering the relations between economic exploitation and social domination, which lie beneath the representation of female labor. In this regard, I follow Peter Hitchcock’s claim that in order to analyze labor representation the critic needs to pay attention to “class abstraction” or “the extraction of value from the working class under the sign of capital [in order] to think beyond the tactile presence of the commodity to labor’s integral role in the commodity’s potentiality” (23). By studying

the representation of working women, my dissertation brings to the foreground the abstractness of female labor, the often unseen processes through which the value of female labor is turned into exchange value. By analyzing the social and literary processes that generate the “misrecognition” (Hitchcock 21) of the female worker, I attempt to shed light on the ways female labor representation hides or emphasizes the connection between the use value of female work and the nation’s economy on which the middle-class depends.

However, how do we understand the visualization of working women characters in cultural representations when, at the economic level, relations of class and gender exploitation are often unseen and marginal in the dominant bourgeois imagination? As Hitchcock suggests, “the paradox of working-class subjectivity is that [it] must be seen in order to confirm that class is there and negotiable in stable and unthreatening ways” (21). The texts I analyze, belonging to four different aesthetic trends,—*costumbrista*, realist, and avant-garde—use the figure of the female worker as a way of giving form to, controlling, molding, and dominating that otherness that provoked fears, desires and anxieties. In this sense, I endorse the idea that aesthetic representation should not be understood as an innocent act in which the association between referent and meaning in the sign is exempt of ideological content. In fact, my dissertation underlines that “the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal ‘solutions’ to unresolvable social contradictions” (Jameson 79). Therefore, in order to study the contradictory meanings imbricated in the construction of the working woman, it is also necessary to pay attention to the material construction and organization

of the text itself within the aesthetic trend in which it is produced. I propose that the study of the representation of female work provides new insights into the ideological and material construction of the text itself.

Plays, short stories and novels echoed intellectuals' preoccupations about middle-class women working for wages. As later chapters will more closely examine, the manifestations and evolution of artistic movements and genres were thoroughly ingrained in and influenced by the historical and aesthetic contexts in which they took place. Turn-of-the-century writers belonging to either *realismo*, *costumbrismo*, *modernismo* or *vanguardia* depicted the working woman using both aesthetic devices particular to each genre and ideological perspectives that contested and/or agreed with dominant values of femininity. Hence I will investigate the competing meanings and internal contradictions of these narratives, while bearing in mind diverse contemporary narratives of class and gender. In doing this, I will try to avoid categorical essentialisms that view female characters as reactionary and mere cultural products of patriarchy.

In contrast to the Anglo context, few literary critics have focused their research on Spanish working women and their representation not just in late nineteenth to early twentieth century but at any time. In fact, most existing critical studies of turn-of-the-century Spain have focused on the figure of the often unhappy and dissatisfied bourgeois housewife. Thus, I intend to focus on the critical connections between class and gender and to question the often-unacknowledged assumption that middle-class women are the unmarked, neutral standard in relation to which social gender norms are established. Thus, my dissertation turns attention to representations of middle and working-class

female labor contributing to a much-needed study of female labor in turn-of-the-century Spanish cultural studies.

I have decided to work with several texts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries since I believe it is possible to attain a comprehensive perspective on the structures of feeling of a given society when working together with high and low cultural products. The material I include comprises an important example of the production and practices of Spanish culture from 1880 to 1930. The 1880s are especially relevant for this is when the Spanish realist novel and *género chico* are at their height. Whereas both genres had begun to be produced decades earlier, it is during the 1880s when both experienced their highest levels of popularity. Regarding the realist novel, Joe Labanyi claims that “[t]he 1868 Revolution produced a flurry of novel writing but it was only in the 1880s, after the betrayal of the revolution with the Restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1875, that the realist novel as such became established” (Galdós 5). Like the realist novel, the popularity of *género chico* responds to the public’s desire—especially of the recently empowered middle class—for the “mimetic” reflection of reality, gaining especial importance in the 1880s with the staging of blockbusters such as “La camisa de la Lola” (1880) or “La Gran Vía” (1886).

1930 brings to a close the period that I study because at this time there was an important change of direction in the aesthetic and political attitudes of Spanish artists. After the emphasis on aesthetic renovation of the avant-gardes during the second and third decades of the twentieth century, many artists began to produce socially committed and highly politicized art in the 1930s. The economic crisis of 1929, the appearance of fascism in Europe, and the arrival of the Spanish Second Republic in 1931 are some of

the factors that explain this turn. Specifically, 1930 marks the moment when a group of intellectuals, the *escritores de avanzada*, leave behind their avant-garde apolitization creating the magazine “Nueva España.” According to Víctor Fuentes, this group of artists “dentro de un frente único de izquierda, . . . trabaja, animado por el espíritu de un colectivismo intelectual-obrero, por una República de avanzada, socialista” (57).

My corpus includes a wide range of cultural forms and perspectives, ranging from *costumbrista* plays, realist novels and short stories, to the literary works of the avant-garde. Precisely because my research focuses on class as a major analytical category, I study *sainetes* and *zarzuelas*, key expressions of turn-of-the-century popular culture, in which working-class women feature prominently.

The first chapter of my dissertation, “Defining the Autochthonous in *Género Chico*: The *Castiza* Working Woman,” examines the representation of urban female workers in *zarzuelas* and *sainetes* written by canonical and non-canonical authors. These operettas and plays portrayed working-class women’s language and practices in order to (re)articulate the *castizo* or genuine essence of Spain. In this manner, spaces such as the imagined nation or the city are integral in the configuration of the working woman as *castiza*. Whereas *costumbrista* essays, articles and novels have received more scholarly attention, its manifestations in theater, especially in turn-of-the-century musicals, often have been relegated to a secondary position in literary and cultural criticism. For this reason, I study *costumbrismo* in its later theatrical manifestation at the turn of the century, *género chico* or “*small genre*,” with the hope that I will contribute to the analysis of the cultural production of this period in Spain.

The second chapter, “(In)Decent Jobs: Women’s Labor in *Realism*,” investigates how petit-bourgeois and working-class female characters negotiate the notion of domestic space, female decorum and work in the works of two canonical realist authors: Pérez Galdós and Pardo Bazán. Against dominant middle-class perceptions of the home as a “safe haven” detached from the world of labor and capitalist production/exploitation of the public space, both writers’ work demonstrate the instability of such configuration. Specifically, I will analyze Galdós’ *Tormento* (1884), where the figure of the domestic servant who simultaneously inhabits both the public and domestic space, dismantles bourgeois perceptions of the domestic space as a space of rest and reproduction. In “Casi artista” (1908) and “El mundo” (1908) working women reconfigure the domestic space as a site of production through domestic work in order to survive and preserve their female decency. Their control of marketing techniques and language, with a strong will to work, allows them to carve a space for themselves in conservative Spanish society.

Finally, the third chapter, “Dangerous Spaces of Work: The Store and the Salesgirl in Avant-Garde Literature,” explores the association between the configuration of the store/market as a “dangerous” space for the salesgirl as an exploited or consumed body and her association with the rising consumer culture in modern Spain. While both novels describe the downfall of the female workers’ protagonists as a result of their desire for commodities, the aesthetic and ideological perspectives differ greatly in each text. In particular, I will analyze Carmen de Burgos’ *La rampa* (1917), which portrays the shopgirl from a feminist perspective and Gómez de la Serna’s *La Nardo* (1930), which presents a masculine gaze of the salesgirl. In addition, the representation of the salesgirl’s

experience in the city in both novels also allows the narrative to postulate the idea of an ideal nation.

In all, my dissertation will try to bring to the fore the geographies of female labor as presented in different turn-of-the-century narratives . By doing so, I hope to question contemporary dominant perceptions which visualized working women as dangerous and incontrollable but which, simultaneously, rendered them invisible and out of place in the Spanish economy and society of the time.

CHAPTER 1

DEFINING THE AUTOCHTHONOUS IN *GÉNERO CHICO*: THE *CASTIZA* WORKING WOMAN

According to José Escobar Arronis' essay "La crítica del costumbrismo en el XIX," the publishing of Mesonero Romanos' two-volume work of articles *Panorama matritense* in the year 1835 marks the moment when a new way of understanding Spanish art is consolidated. It is *costumbrismo*, an aesthetic cultural trend that encompasses diverse genres and cultural expressions such as the visual arts and literature. For Enrique Rubio Cremades, "El artículo de costumbres fue, tal vez, el único género literario capaz de aunar y agrupar no sólo a escritores de distinto signo o escuela literaria, sino también a autores adscritos a géneros específicos y concretos."

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, much of the *costumbrista* literary production aimed to entertain and educate the reader with the portrayal and description of the customs and uses of local popular life and characters or *tipos*. These *tipos* made use of popular language—turns of phrases, mispronounced words, working-class jargon—laced with a light and humorous content. Working women, as part of the popular urban and rural landscapes depicted by these authors, often appeared as primary or secondary characters.² For instance, during the eighteenth century, Ramón de la Cruz wrote several *sainetes*—one-act plays—in which working women appear as the main characters: maids, peasants, greengrocers, etc. are common in his portrayals of the

² Many eighteenth-century representations of working women can be found in drama, one of the most popular Spanish genres at this time. Coupled with early *costumbrista* female labor representations, neoclassical comedies such as "La Petrimetra" (1762) by Nicolás Fernández de Moratín was also a strong influence on late 19th and early 20th-century cultural representations of female labor.

populace's everyday life. These *sainetes* had a strong influence on the turn-of-the-century *género chico* ("small genre"). During the 19th century, playwright and journalist Manuel Bretón de los Herreros dedicated three articles to widely known female *tipos* in the book *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* (1843): "La castañera" ("the chestnutseller"), "La nodriza" ("the wetnurse"), and "La lavandera" ("the washerwoman"). Like earlier writers such as de la Cruz and Fernández de Moratín, Bretón de los Herreros perceived the literary aesthetics provided by *costumbrismo* as the perfect means to educate while entertaining his readers (Garelli 12). However, in spite of their humorous tone, his three articles also carried heavy ideological overtones that verged on snobbism and misogyny. The author projected into his portrayal of female workers his own middle-class anxieties about the working-class female accessing both the bourgeois public and private space. Years later, and as a reply to male *costumbrista* writers, journalist Faustina Sáez de Melgar edited the book *Las mujeres españolas, americanas y lusitanas. Pintadas por sí mismas* (1881), a compilation of *costumbrista* articles by female authors. In the book, the writers portrayed different types of women—including female workers—from a female—and middle-class perspective—since, as Sáez de Melgar mentions in the preface, "nunca fue el hombre juez competente para juzgar a la mujer" (v).

The aesthetics of *costumbrismo* also had a deep influence on the *folletín*—short novels published in serial form—and the nineteenth-century novel and was cultivated by authors such as Wenceslao Ayguals de Izco, Luis Vals, José María Pereda and Cecilia Bohl de Faber. Female worker characters were present in many of these literary works, often as a way of teaching proper feminine morality and behavior rather than delving into the wider social and economic problems that placed real working-class women in a

position of social disadvantage. This is the case of Ana García de la Torre's *Por una lágrima. Novela de costumbres* (1878), Fernán Caballero's *La Gaviota* (1864) and José María Pereda's *El buey suelto* (1878).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the association between *costumbrismo* and the mass commodification of culture inspired a new configuration of Spanish drama called the *género chico*.³ Part of the *sainete*'s formal and thematic antecedents date back to some centuries earlier. During the so-called "Siglo de Oro" (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) the *entremés*, a one-act humorous theatrical piece with popular characters, became very successful in the hands of authors such as Lope de Vega, Miguel de Cervantes and Quiñones de Benavente. Nonetheless, the *entremés* was banned in the year 1778 because the government found its themes vulgar and detached from the neoclassical ideal of the Enlightenment (Lamas 55). In fact, the perception of this dramatic composition by its detractors as "minor" literature without any aesthetic or moral value created a debate which continued into the following centuries.

The *entremés* gave way to the eighteenth-century *sainete*, a longer dramatic play with similar content and form. Both Ramón de la Cruz and Juan Ignacio González del Castillo cultivated this theatrical form with great success and had a strong influence thematically and aesthetically on the turn-of-the-century *género chico*. Then, by the end of the nineteenth century, the musical version of the *género chico* gained sway and adopted the *sainete lírico* in most of its production. The one-act musical play *zarzuela* maintained popularity until the 1920s. Whereas the *ópera* or *zarzuela grande* was considered the *género grande*—major genre—because of its elitist themes, language and

³ *Género chico* consisted of one or two-act humorous plays, *sainetes*, usually meant to become musicals once on stage.

expensive productions, *zarzuelas*—one or two-act Spanish operettas—became the major attraction for those who could not afford to attend an expensive *ópera* performance.

Indeed the appearance of the one-act *zarzuela* plays was part of a theatrical phenomenon in which former four-hour-long theatrical plays were reduced to one hour to cut the price of each showing. This brief theatrical format was called the *teatro por horas* or hourly plays and it granted theatre access to low-income audiences, mostly comprised of the newly formed urban working-class eager to spend its scarce leisure time at the theater (Allier 123).

The reduction of the plays' duration also implied a considerable increase in the number of people attending the theater each night as now there were four performances per night instead of a single one. *Zarzuela* producers, understanding the popularity of this new theatrical scheme and the need to offer new plays as often as possible, demanded of both playwrights and composers the mass production of librettos and scores. The commodification of theater plays soon awoke the disapproval of some journalists' and critics' who accused the *teatro por horas* of being immoral and poor in artistic value (Deleito y Piñuela 4-5). Like decades before, the condemnation of the genre by certain intellectuals did not prevent *zarzuela* from becoming part of the successful nineteenth and twentieth-century urban phenomena of mass commodification and consumption of popular culture.

Adopting *constumbrista* aesthetics and themes, the plays of *género chico* “responde[n] a esa exaltación nacionalista europea que pretende buscar el alma de los pueblos” (Roberto Ferrer 70). In Spain, the nationalist desire that influenced *zarzuela* authors to “search for the essence of Spain in a pure caste or race and the exclusion of

foreign elements” (Richards 153n8) was referred to as *casticismo*. As Margot Versteeg has pointed out, “[e]l costumbrismo tiene parecidos evidentes con el género chico en . . . lo que atañe a la visión pequeño burguesa que se esconde detrás de la representación selectiva e idealizada de los barrios bajos y sus habitantes [proporcionando] la imagen más genuina y menos contaminada de España” (56). *Zarzuela* authors thus aspired to depict diverse *tipos*: everyday-life popular characters, whose language and practices manifested the Spanish *castizo* essence or the autochthonous, typical or genuine spirit of the Spanish nation. In particular, working-class female characters—many of them workers such as factory or workshop employees who often inhabited “los barrios [urbanos] populares [que] desde el punto de vista de la burguesía, habían permanecido muy impermeables a todo tipo de transformaciones” (Romero Ferrer 24)—embodied the *castizo* essence and were seen as the repositories and guardians of the true Spanish national spirit.

The patriotic and nationalist recreation of the working-class woman in *género chico* was based on pre-existent myths about gender and class already in circulation. The figure of the popular and patriotic eighteenth-century *maja* or *manola* (a lower-class young woman) constitutes an important antecedent to the construction of working-class female characters in nineteenth-century *zarzuelas*. *Majismo*, as an eighteenth-century *casticista* and nationalist reaction on the part of the higher classes against “costumbres, vestimentas, jergas, cada vez más influidas por las modas de otros países europeos,” constructs the lower-class man and woman (*majos*) in the bourgeois dominant discourse as “una reserva a la que acudir para contrarrestar la invasión foránea” (González Troyano 8). Apart from the *majas*’ language, clothes, and customs, *zarzuela* female characters also

inherited the *majas*' peculiar amorous interactions with their male counterparts. In contrast to the more reserved and restrained bourgeois conceptualization of love, the *majos* and *majas*' love relationships were "más directa, más picante y erótica, [y] menos civilizada" (Martín Gaité 98).

During the 1880s and 1890s, when *género chico* was at its height, Spain was undergoing a series of economic and social events that threatened its national cohesion. The emergence and more effective organization of the urban working class threatened bourgeois hegemony by promoting a nationalistic agenda that was different from the middle-class'. In addition, a general feeling of economic failure, encouraged by the inability of the Spanish state to assimilate the loss of the colonies, led to a sense of loss of control and instability among the ruling class. Also contributing to these political and social transformations, there was a progressive desire for political recognition of the Catalan and Basque regions that undermined the idea of a unified Spanish nation. Such problems aroused a general feeling of failure among *regeneracionistas* or Spanish intellectuals who sought to define the nation and cure 'los males de la patria'.

Whereas *regeneracionismo* appeared mostly in political talks, essays, and newspaper articles, it also permeated other types of discourses such as *género chico*. *Zarzuela* thus became a venue where writers and music composers tackled the problem of constructing a Spanish identity. The *costumbrismo* of *género chico* provided *zarzuela* authors with an effective means to highlight and solve Spain's identity problems: *zarzuela* characters successfully negotiated nationhood, gender, and class to offer a remedy to Spain's failures. In this manner, *zarzuela* working-class female characters were often directly implicated in the *regenerationist* Spanish nation-building project as

women are usually seen in nationalist projects as “reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups[,] as signifiers of ethnic/national differences [and] as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles” (Anthias and Yuval Davis 313).

The location of *castizo* Spanishness in the figure of the working-class woman was part of the middle-class nationalist project imbedded in *zarzuelas*. However, the syncretism and protean character of turn-of-the-century *zarzuela* aesthetics and politics affected and complicated this association. Thus, “la no necesidad de adaptarse a ninguna norma más allá de satisfacer los gustos del público—siempre cambiante—habían diseñado un tipo de teatro francamente permeable a los nuevos contextos sociales y estéticos” (Romero Ferrer 23).

By the turn of the nineteenth century, *género chico* adopted a diverse array of foreign, national, modern, and traditional theatrical and musical genres such as the traditional *sainete*, regional rhythms and dances such as *jotas* or *seguidillas*, and the French *revue*, cakewalk or foxtrot. As Salaün puts it “La paradoja del teatro lírico español es que se considera como el bastión del casticismo nacional y no deja de ser el caballo de Troya de todas las innovaciones extranjeras” (“Cuplé y variedades” 132). In the same manner, turn-of-the-century *género chico* also reflected the slow but progressive establishment of modernity in turn-of-the-century Spanish society through its themes. Responses to industrialization, capitalism, the mass commodification of culture and travel, and a new class-consciousness materialized in these musical plays. Indeed, the *zarzuela* genre responded to “una preocupación común durante la segunda mitad del siglo XIX y principios del XX [por encontrar] un género dramático-musical capaz de combinar la modernidad europea y la identidad heredada española” (Lamas 122).

As the creators of fictional landscapes of turn-of-the-century Spanish society, *zarzuela* authors often showed “la sociedad española como unidad histórica a la vez moderna y *castiza*” (Lamas 127) refiguring the working-class woman into a successful visual and discursive spectacular commodity in nineteenth and nineteenth-century theaters.

In this sense, an old discussion regarding popular cultural productions and their consumption by the masses (Strinati 3) might be applied to the study of *género chico*: Was the depiction of working-class life and *tipos* a mere fictional recreation by middle-class (usually male) authors, trying to impose their ideology as a means of social control? If so, why were they so successful in appealing to working-class audiences? Up to what point did the audience identify itself with the characters on stage, possibly representing their own experience? Does the commodification of *género chico* mean that it lacked artistic quality and was not ideologically challenging?

In my opinion, taking a definite stance on either side of the debate could lead to an essentialist and partial understanding of the reception of the cultural text. To say that *zarzuelas* are “minor art” on the grounds of “their low quality” is also to overlook the creativity and artistry employed by some writers and composers in their *zarzuela* production. In the same vein, to view *zarzuelas* only as a cultural tool of ideological domination in the hands of bourgeois writers or, conversely, as a liberating and revolutionary device for the working class, is to oversimplify and ignore the complexity of the production and reception of mass culture. Distancing myself from the theory of modern capitalism and culture industry by the Frankfurt School, or a radical Bakhtinian understanding of the subversive power of carnival, I agree with literary critic Lucy

Harney. This *zarzuela* critic claims that the fact that *zarzuela* was a type of mass culture “[did] not preclude the dramatization of meaningful social concerns, thereby contributing to broader impulses toward political change” (15). Similarly, the presence of a humorous and light tone in *zarzuela* librettos, reinforced by their staging—humor being an intrinsic element in the *género chico*—does not necessarily imply that this genre did not attain any transgressive meaning. It is too simplistic to imply that audiences were mere dupes at the mercy of middle-class ideology and that they consumed with passivity bourgeois cultural signifiers imbedded with static meanings. It is necessary to acknowledge the possibility of working-class audiences’ agency in the renegotiation of and/or resistance to these signifiers and their meanings.

In this vein, I do not endorse the elitist association of popular culture consumption with unruly and sensual working-class bodies and uncontained pleasures. According to this theoretical view, the study of class and gender is reduced to a dualistic perspective which “ignores an important tradition of respectability in working-class life” (Felski, “Nothing to Declare” 35). What is more “opposing a repressed and repressive bourgeoisie to an unruly, pleasure-driven working class leaves little room for exploring the various class fractions that fall outside this opposition” (Felski, “Nothing to Declare” 35). Thus, neither fully reactionary nor revolutionary, *género chico* often carries conflicting meanings at the level of content and form that bring forth the social, economic and moral anxieties of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century bourgeois Spanish society. Indeed, as my analysis demonstrates, the portrayal of the working-class, particularly of the employed working-class female in *género chico* responds to both the intellectual and consumptive bodily pleasures and desires of middle-class writers and

audiences. In *género chico*, the working-class woman is positioned in the axes of turn-of-the-century spatial reconfigurations of modernity, tradition, class struggle and gender differentiation in order to embody the *castizo* Spanish essence.

1.1. A Sexual Landmark: The Urban Maid in “La Gran Vía” (1886) by Felipe Pérez González

The complexity and recurrence of the character of the *criada* (maid) in Spanish literature could well be a single topic of study for a doctoral thesis. During the *Siglo de Oro* and *Neoclasicismo*, the *criada* played an important part in drama, particularly in comedy, with superficial humorous roles. For instance, in the neoclassical comedy “La Petrimetra” (1762) by Nicolás Fernández de Moratín, the main characters’ love story is enlivened by humorous dialogues between two maids. While the *criada* was a flat humorous character in comedies and short plays during these earlier centuries, it is in the nineteenth-century novel, especially in the realist novel, that their presence in the literary work responds to more complex literary and ideological themes. Clarín’s *Su único hijo* (1890) and *La Regenta* (1885), or Galdós’ *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1887) and *Misericordia* (1897) among many other novels are some examples of representations of the *criada* in which middle-class social anxieties and desires about the working-class and women greatly influenced the way working women were portrayed. As studied in the following chapter in more detail, the domestic worker difuses the artificial boundaries between private and public space at a time when the dominant bourgeois ideology extolled a strict division between home and work. In her book *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice*, Patricia Hill Collins talks about the term “outsider-within” to explain how individuals are located in border or liminal spaces in which they acquire new

identities and deal with uneven power relations. Specifically, “the outsider-within location describes a particular knowledge/power relationship, one of gaining knowledge about or of a dominant group without gaining the full power accorded to members of that group” (6). Hill Collins continues to explain how black domestics working at white people’s houses returned to their communities and talked about the inferiority of white people (7). In the case of Spain, such physical and metaphorical penetration of the “public” outsider, the working-class woman, into middle-class domestic life was a source of bourgeois anxieties about keeping the home as a private domain, free from public intrusion—in this case by the maids’ gossiping.

Hill Collins also mentions that even though these domestics spent most of their time within the white people’s homes, they “could never be full family members” (7). This would grant them their status as the public Other or “outsider” and, as in the case of Spain and other Western countries, would facilitate their exploitation by their employers. Indeed, “Outsider-within spaces are riddled with contradictions” (5), an idea which, as we will see, continuously resurfaces through fictional works featuring maids.

While the realist novel carved out more intricate characters of the maid in some cases, the *género chico* continued the *Siglo de Oro entremés* tradition of representing the *criada* in a light humorous way without a penetrating study of her psychological world. Such is the case of many *zarzuelas* in which the *criada* “la Menegilda,” like *cigarreras*, *chulas* or *modistillas* (“seemstresses”), also had an important part in the plot. However, even though these characters are not constructed in depth and their presence in the narrative is not lengthy, their position within the aesthetics and politics of the *zarzuela*

narrative discloses turn-of-the-century anxieties about the “outsider-within,” i.e. the working-class woman within the bourgeois home.

The case of the *zarzuela* “La Gran Vía” (The Great Avenue) in which turn-of-the-century socio-spatial reconfigurations and economic transformations directly influenced the portrayal of the *criada* “la Menegilda” is paramount in this respect. In 1886, two months before the premier of “La Gran Vía”, the architect Carlos Velasco’s urban planning project to widen and sanitize a major avenue in Madrid was approved. Such a project, based on what Walter Benjamin described as the rational development of the urban space in his article “Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” reflected the desire of what Joe Labanyi has seen as an emerging Spanish urban bourgeoisie obsessed with hygiene, capital and class differentiation (*Gender and Modernization* 70-2). The new avenue, conceptualized according to the European urban parameters of the time, would connect diverse vital spaces of the city, allowing the fluid circulation of both capital and individuals (Parsons, *Cultural History* 35). The construction of a sewage system, new buildings and the widening of open spaces would facilitate an aesthetic and visual renovation of the city which would liken it to the modern metropolises of Paris and London. While the construction of La Gran Vía would not materialize until some decades later, a considerable number of architectural projects did take place during the last two decades of the nineteenth century motivated by this frenzy for renewal.

Nonetheless, the modernization of Madrid, like the rest of the nation, was an uneven process full of contradictions, often excluding the peripheral neighborhoods and the working-class population from its benefits. Indeed, as Carlos Alonso argues, “the cultural arrangement of center/periphery was [legitimized by] the myth of modernity

[which] sought to naturalize the hierarchy that had been created, in effect, by [an uneven] economic relationship” (19). Without a doubt, the industrial and commercial restructuring of the cities attracted thousands of impoverished peasants to the urban nucleus, which resulted in a reconfiguration of the urban landscape which did not often meet the bourgeois ideal of a city. In Madrid, for example, the city center, reconstructed and planned with care, was in direct contrast to the working-class neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city. Overcrowded houses built with low-quality materials, narrow streets, lack of sewage and electric systems showed the poorest side of Madrid. It does not come as a surprise that the middle-classes became even more obsessed with hygiene after the 1884-5 cholera epidemic which “claim[ed] 120,000 lives, with particularly high casualties in the working-class districts of Madrid” (Hauser qtd. in Labanyi, *Gender* 73). Consequently, as Labanyi describes, an illusory division between public and private hygiene became prevalent during this time. Public hygiene would include “the regulation of the non-individualized bodies of the urban masses and prostitutes” and private hygiene would refer to “the individualized bodies within the bourgeois family” (Labanyi, *Gender* 70). This was a middle-class construct that would make obvious the failed bourgeois attempt to keep the private and the public separate (Labanyi, *Gender* 70).

The new architectural and social physiognomy of Madrid was portrayed in novels, articles and also in the *zarzuela*. One of the most successful *zarzuela* subgenres by the turn of the century was the “revista lírica”, a *zarzuela* which gave an account of current issues “que el público reconocía con facilidad” (Alier 81). For Versteeg, “Contrariamente a los sainetes que ensalzan a un Madrid fijado, estático y preindustrial, las revistas dejan sitio a la ironía y reflejan las ventajas y desventajas de la urbe moderna en pleno

desarrollo” (232). The *zarzuela* “La Gran Vía”—libretto by Felipe Pérez González and score by Chueca y Valverde—stands out as part of the cultural production of the nineteenth century which aimed to reconstruct the urban landscape as a panoptical spectacle; a reconstruction that was stimulated by costumbrista authors such as Mesonero Romanos in their literary work years earlier (Haidt 26; Parsons, *Cultural History* 22). Staged for the first time in 1886, “La Gran Vía” thus attests to the contradictions and repercussions that the construction of this spacious avenue would cause, especially in the existing streets and their inhabitants. Although the actualization of the architectural project is not perceived as viable in the *zarzuela* since it will only happen when “críe la rana pelo” (355), the *zarzuela* also manifests the problems and tensions created by the bourgeois impetus to modernize a city characterized by the economic inequalities of its population.

“La Gran Vía,” in which the journey, as remarked by Versteeg (232), and the visual have a major role, invites the audience to participate in a tour of different Madrilénian neighborhoods where a series of urban human and geographical landmarks are located. Hence the audience embarks on a visual journey into the social and physical urban landscape through the eyes and experience of two *paseantes* or *flâneurs*. The first *paseante*, Caballero de Gracia, personifies the Spain of the Old Regime in which an aristocratic title and origins prevail over the accumulation and circulation of capital. Like any other Spanish nobleman, Caballero is an idle character with no other goal than his own enjoyment. However, like the government system that brought about the existence of this social class, Caballero is becoming extinct and being substituted by a new and younger social urban figure, the *flâneur*, one of the most representative characters of the

nineteenth-century social and visual regime. Similar to the *flâneurs* in other European metropolis, this modern *flâneur* or “El Paseante,” as he is symbolically called in “La Gran Vía,” enjoys a fair amount of capital and free time and draws maps of working-class Madrid from a masculine bourgeois point of view through his walking. Paseante is “a man of pleasure, [. . .] a man who takes visual possession of the city” (Wilson 98) and “symbolizes the privilege of freedom to move about the public arenas of the city observing but never interacting” (Pollock 68). His desire to observe the spatial otherness of Madrid permits him to move from the most central and rich parts of the city to the marginal neighborhoods of the capital where he “discovers” them as a colonial explorer.

According to Anne McClintock, the *flâneur* felt a special predilection for poor neighborhoods, usually perceived from a bourgeois and imperialist lens as the wild, uncivilized and uncontrollable areas of the city. Their value lies in being areas always open to exploration by male members of the higher classes where “social boundaries were permanently on the edge of break down” (*Imperial Leather* 81). However, in “La Gran Vía,” McClintock’s concept does not manifest itself in such a clear fashion nor is it free of certain contradictions. On the one hand, thanks to the intromission of both *paseantes* in the urban spaces of marginality, the audience is presented with an open social criticism. Explored are the precarious situation of the working-class, the incompetence and thirst for power of the politicians and the social contradictions and exclusions which emerged from the modernization process. As Lucy Harney mentions, the fact that the *Zarzuela* is a mass culture product does not imply that it is a genre empty of any transgressive political content (15). At the same time, however, the *zarzuela* also keeps a paternalistic point of view of the working class it aims to represent, especially

when portraying working-class women, as I will analyze. In fact, it is in the representation of the female worker that the narrative perspective of “La Gran Vía” becomes particularly classist and sexist. In addition, and as Versteeg has pointed out, the inclusion of working-class neighborhoods in this *zarzuela* was also due to monetary interests: they granted its success in the ticket office (238).

The presentation and personification of different Madrilenian streets in the first scene of “La Gran Vía” is followed by the second scene entitled “En las afueras” (in the outskirts), which offers a detailed exploration of Madrid’s marginal space and its inhabitants. If hoping to find the typical *costumbrista* scene in which working-class places are represented as picturesque, the spectator would find instead that the scene annotations—“lugar nada ameno, fértil ni pintoresco en las afueras de Madrid” (321)—do not follow this presumption, offering a panorama closer to turn-of-the-century naturalism. In this scene, at the dialogical level, Caballero de Gracia calls Paseante’s attention to the obvious differences between the nice streets of downtown Madrid and the downtrodden neighborhoods in the outskirts—“Pues amigo, las afueras / tienen muy poco que ver” (321)—and to the incompetence of the politicians who create urban projects to improve the city’s architectural arrangement, projects which are never implemented:

Paseante. Pero ya tenemos tres/o cuatro proyectos

Caballero. ¡Cómo!

¿Tres o cuatro?

Paseante. O cinco o seis.

Caballero. ¡Si los proyectos no quedan
en proyecto!

Paseante. Alguna vez...

Pero hay otros con fortuna.

El de crear dos o tres

ministerios que hacen falta.

¡Muchísima falta!

Caballero. ¿A quién?

Paseante. Pues, hombre, a los que desean

ser ministros... Ya ve usted...

Hay muchos necesitados.

Caballero. (Riendo) ¿De veras?

Paseante. No; de poder.

Caballero. ¿Y los de trabajo?

Paseante. ¡Ah! Ésos

ya se arreglarán después. (321-2)

Whereas urban projects which would benefit the living conditions of the working class do not take place, the government's capital is invested in the construction of unnecessary building for different ministries according to the capricious desires of those in power. Paseante, in a discourse immersed in irony, condemns those who are in need not of truths but of power and draws attention to those who are unemployed and forgotten. Interestingly, Paseante's criticism goes beyond the mere incompetence of politicians in uttering a type of sociopolitical manifesto in favor of the working class. According to Paseante, politicians do not care about the problems of the working class. On the contrary, if unemployed workers ask for better life conditions

. . . se les responde
que pensamos en su bien
y que tendrán lo que anhelan
si no este mes... otro mes. (322)

But if the workers decide to shout and demonstrate, disturbing the established social order, then “se les dan dos o tres palos” and the situation goes back to normal. These politicians are willing to maintain a particular political and social order—“ante todo el orden, ¿eh?” (322)—through violent repression in order to silence dissenting opinions—“tapar con resolución toda boca que amenaza” (322).

There is no doubt that the rhetoric of these lines is clearly influenced by the emerging ideas brought about by the First International which rapidly spread among the Spanish proletariat by the end of the nineteenth century. For Paseante, abusive politicians and their corruption happen “aquí y en Massachusset / [ya que] el que manda es el que manda, / y es un pobre el que lo es” (322). Governments in Western countries are actually supported by capitalist interests—“lo que vale es el tener” (322). In order to maintain their spaces of power, they silence dissenting voices. In the case of the disempowered they do this through violence—“con mordaza” (323)—and in the case of the powerful, through bribes—“con turrón” (323). “Demasiada crítica” (237) as Versteeg states. According to Alberto Castilla, Paseante’s discourse voices the political rhetoric employed by Cánovas del Castillo, Head of the State in the 1880s, in which social equality was out of the question (qtd. in Versteeg 239). Censorship did not take long to delete or change the most subversive paragraphs, resulting in “una obra edulcorada, que contiene tan sólo unas alusiones, tolerables probablemente por el alto nivel de generalización” (238).

While the depiction of the workers is sympathetic with their cause, the portrayal of the maid Menegilda in the next scene shows a more complex and contradictory depiction of the working class in which gender plays a crucial role. In these streets of the periphery, both *flâneurs* encounter the maid Menegilda. Menegilda, one of the most popular *zarzuela* characters to this day, is described as a *castiza* or typical and autochthonous Madrilenian character who makes use of low-class jargon and mispronounced words (‘parné’, ‘adivinao’, ‘pa’, ‘ca’, ‘melitar’, etc.). Singing an *habanera*, Menegilda narrates how she had to migrate to Madrid in order to work as a maid and make a living. Menegilda’s story is actually based on a real migratory movement especially important by the turn of the century in which many young girls from the rural areas migrated to urban centers to perform domestic service (Otero Carvajal qtd. in Cabrera Pérez 39).

In her sung monologue, Menegilda makes clear that she had to “aprender a fregar, a barrer, a guisar, a planchar y a coser” (323) to serve as a maid. Such a process of learning to perform domestic work goes against the patriarchal understanding of women’s labor at this time which considered the performance of domestic chores as natural and inherent to women. The feminization of housework also had repercussions at the economic level. Women who performed such jobs were labeled as “unskilled” workers, a definition which allowed employers to “keep their labor costs low” (Enloe 34). This meant that maids, as many other female workers of the time, received meager salaries in spite of working long hours. It is not strange then that Menegilda also learns to *sisar* (“pilfer money”) from what her mistress gives her for shopping.

Indeed in the *zarzuela*, Menegilda pilfers money in order to buy fancy clothes which allow her to imagine herself belonging to a better social class. Rita Felski mentions that “shopping play[ed] a leading role in the aestheticization of the commodity and the marketing of lifestyles that simultaneously demarcated and blurred class distinctions, encouraging everyone to aspire to a middle-class way of life” (*Gender of Modernity* 67). Therefore, by wearing luxurious clothes, the maid blurs the artificial boundaries between social classes. Indeed, “the fact that class and rank are made legible by the wearing, or not wearing, of ‘cloth of gold, silk or purple’ reveals the invented nature of social distinction” (McClintock, *Imperial Leather* 173). It is not surprising that it is during the second part of the nineteenth century that the use of a working uniform was generalized among maids, a norm that speaks volumes about what the higher classes perceived as the threatening similarity between maids and their female employees (Horn 76).

Menegilda steals money with such ability that “al cabo de un año / tenía seis trajes de seda y satén” (324). However, taking into account that maids’ employers kept a rigorous control over their maids’ expenditures, it would be highly unlikely that in only one year, Menegilda would have pilfered enough money to pay for six luxurious silk dresses, which many middle-class women could not afford.

One day, without previous warning, her mistress dismisses her. It could well be that she discovered that Menegilda had stolen some money. But it could also be that her mistress realized that her maid had become a sexual decoy for her husband. The fact is that when she is about to leave, Menegilda recalls:

al darme el señorito
la *cartilla* y el parné

fue y me dijo por lo bajo:

‘Te espero en Eslava tomando café.’ (324 emphasis added)

The *cartilla* or notebook in which domestics’ employers had to write the dates of employment and dismissal shows the implementation of the technologies of social control “que fomentan la autorregulación del yo, el diagnóstico de patologías y la localización de la diferencia” (Delgado, “Subjetividades errantes” 1) in nineteenth-century Europe. In accordance with this practice, Menegilda is inscribed within the nineteenth-century middle-class discourse that diffused the boundaries between domestics and prostitution. Carmen del Moral illustrates how by the turn of the century, the correlation between the prostitute and the maid was not rare. Del Moral also explains how the mandatory use of *cartillas* for both maids and prostitutes was thought to “empuja[r] a las sirvientas a sentirse solidarias de las meretrices y a interiorizar que tarde o temprano, según los reveses de la fortuna, su destino sería el burdel” (53). According to a Parisian police registry from 1830, most prostitutes “were recent migrants to the city from the provinces, and many had experienced an initial seduction and been abandoned by their seducers” (McBride 105). Ironically, however, and looking at actual testimonies of French maids at this time, in many cases “their seducers were in fact their masters” (McBride 132), an idea that Margarita Nelken ratifies in the Spanish case (Scanlon 32). Such a custom, articulated in a humorous way in Menegilda’s song, reveals the danger that maids often experienced in their employers’ home. Elizabeth Wilson states that “the bourgeois home was not in practice a safe haven, least of all for the domestic servants confined within it. On the contrary, it was an ideal location for sexual attacks across class boundaries” (79). Bearing in mind that working-class women’s sexuality was defined

according to what middle-class women's was not, maids were thought to be sexually accessible. Therefore, as working-class women without any type of legal protection, domestic servants were easy targets of sexual abuse on the part of their male employers. What is more, as Carmen del Moral describes, parents would rather have their sons initiate their sexual life with the maid than with a prostitute to reduce the risk of venereal diseases (27). In this manner, the figure of the maid is revealed, as the outsider-within, occupying a social space "riddled with contradictions" (Hill Collins 5). She is trapped in an contradictory discourse based on sexual double morality. At one level, she is rendered as an immoral woman due to her free access to public spaces, which configured her as an easy sexual decoy, and, at the other level, she is subjected to sexual abuse by middle-class men in her domestic working environment.

If the domestic realm is actually configured as a place where the maid's sexuality is threatened, the public space is not a safe place for the maid either. As part of her job, Menegilda needs to dominate the urban geography and learn how to find her way in the city—"brujulear" (323). Critic Cora Kaplan has rightly argued that in the nineteenth-century social middle-class imaginary, women's excessive circulation in the public sphere was associated with lack of sexual morality:

Since the rules of bourgeois femininity were highly prescriptive about the unchaperoned presence of women in public spaces, public visibility of women—as street sellers, costermongers or performers, or simply going about their day-to-day business of shopping or fetching water—was itself a sign of potentially loose morals. (67)

It does not come as a surprise then that when both male *paseantes* start talking to Menegilda, Caballero feels free to flirt with her. At first, supposedly offended, the maid rejects his approach stating that she has a boyfriend and “a la Mengilda ¿sabe usted? naide le falta... que aunque sirvo... soy honrada...”. While this statement could have contributed to the deconstruction of preconceived ideas about female workers’ uncontrollable sexuality, it actually confirms the stereotyping of the character when, approaching Caballero, Menegilda whispers to him: “Si usted tiene que decirme mayormente dos palabras, yo salgo ca quince días, y sirvo en aquella casa, y yo no desairo a naide, y voy todas las semanas al mercado, y cuatro horas en cualquier cosa se pasan” (326). These words underline the relationship between lack of female virtue and womens’ access to public spaces without surveillance. Menegilda’s special mobility in the urban space makes her look like a prostitute instead of an exploited worker who only gets a free day every two weeks.

Menegilda’s indecent behavior is also underlined by the aesthetics of her discourse. As mentioned before, Menegilda’s narration of her experience as a maid is presented to the audience as an *habanera*. Originating in Cuba, the *habanera* was a very popular music genre in Europe by the end of the nineteenth century (Sublette 248). For instance, the famous aria in George Bizet’s “Carmen” was based on Spanish writer Sebastián Yradier’s *habanera* “El Arreglito” (Sublette 248). The *habanera* is characterized by its slow tempo and duple time which resembles the rocking movement of a ship. The fact that Menegilda, like the cigarmaker Carmen, sings life experiences through an *habanera* is quite significant regarding her gender and class configuration in the musical play. The *habanera*’s sensual rhythm allows for the construction and

articulation of a sexualized female character articulated by the actress's body performance on the stage.

Menegilda's flirtatious movements and alluring sways underscore the representation of the working-class woman as a seducer. Furthermore, the maid's libertine sexuality is made "public" not only at the level of the plot but also on stage since it is commodified for "public" consumption. Menegilda in fact flirts not only with Caballero in the street but also with the audience.

La Gran Vía in spite of acknowledging the maid's hard life conditions in the urban realm, constructs her as a catalytic character of bourgeois sexual and class anxieties, in which her 'public' sexuality predominates over her role as a worker, problematizing the coherence of the narrative.

In all, the *zarzuela* has a clear ideological agenda which destabilizes the nineteenth-century bourgeois discourse about modernization. La Gran Vía gives a vision of Madrid which both participates in and rejects such dominant discourse. It depicts social satires both of the higher classes' decision-making process, and of the working class' traditional characterization according to gender: if female, the worker is described in a paternalistic and sexist way; if male, he is portrayed as an individual with autonomy in search of a just political and social cause.

1.2. Cigars, Machines, and the Patriotic Female Worker: (Re)Imagining the Nation in Ángel Munilla and Luis Ferreiros' "Las Cigarreras" (1898)

At the end of the nineteenth century, one of the most recurrent visual and textual cultural encodings of working-class femininity in Spanish paintings, news articles, novels, and *zarzuelas* was impersonated by the *cigarrera*: working-class women who

made cigars and cigarettes in factories located in various Spanish capitals.⁴ In general, European travellers and Spanish authors during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries envisioned the working woman such as the *cigarrera* as the repository of Spanish tradition and Spanish femininity. In particular, Prospero Merimee's novel *Carmen* (1845) and its subsequent musical adaptation to the opera by Georges Bizet influenced the *cigarrera*'s representations in later dominant cultural mediums in Spain such as newspaper articles, paintings, *zarzuelas*, or novels. In many of these cultural encodings, the *cigarrera* was seen as 'the authentic body of national tradition' (McClintock, "No Longer" 92), for she belonged to an idealized working-class urban geography where middle-class authors aimed to find and portray the *castizo* essence still untouched by modernity.

A different matter, however, was the *cigarreras*' lived experiences which, in many instances, contradicted fictional representations. In particular, the *cigarreras*' political activity in real life was part of the emergence of a modern working-class consciousness, which through "[t]heir strikes and demonstrations[,] reflected the spirit of contemporary social movements" (Capel Martínez, "Life and Work" 146). It is important to note that thanks to their direct involvement and active participation in their labor struggles, female cigarmakers enjoyed wages "por encima de la media nacional femenina" (Capel Martínez, *Trabajo y la educación* 155). At the same time, *cigarreras*, as working-class women and as workers actively engaged in politics, "challenge[d] the dualistic world model created by sociologists with its categories of public/private and traditional/modern" (Capel Martínez, "Life and Work" 146). In many instances, the

⁴ See Faustina Sáez de Melgar's *Rosa, la cigarrera de Madrid* (1872) and Emilia Pardo Bazán's *La Tribuna* (1882). Also, Gonzalo Bilbao, "Las cigarreras" (1915).

fictional *cigarrera*—and by extension, other working-class female laborers—came to incarnate bourgeois anxieties about modernization: a “fear of a working-class ‘other’ whose responses to modernity were unpredictable and perhaps not entirely controllable” (Graham and Labanyi 14). In fact, the *cigarreras*’ active participation in diverse political demonstrations and riots throughout the nineteenth century kept the public attention on their persona and problematized their representation within the Spanish context as the *zarzuela* “Las cigarreras” demonstrates.

“Las cigarreras” by Ángel Munilla y Luis Ferreiro and musical score by Miguel Santonja was staged in Madrid in 1887 after the violent 1872 and 1885 revolts against the mechanization of the tobacco *factories* (Candela Soto 86), the 1896 riots in Seville incited by *cigarreras* demanding better job conditions, and patriotic demonstrations by *cigarreras* in Madrid in 1896 (O’Connor “Representation” 154-7). Echoing traditional perceptions of *cigarreras* and their role in the 1896 events as seen by the general press (O’Connor “Representation” 151-3), “Las cigarreras” presents some of the tensions that middle-class male authors encountered when dealing with such a complex and ambiguous character.

Ángel Munilla y Luis Ferrero were two of the many *zarzuela* libretto writers who appeared during the end of the century when the four-hour long plays of the *zarzuela grande* or Spanish opera were gradually replaced by four one-hour *zarzuelas*, known as *teatro por horas*. The great demand for one-act *zarzuelas* attracted multiple writers and music composers who saw the mass-production of *zarzuela* as their chance to become famous and rich. Usually, libretto authors collaborated with others to produce more librettos in less time and to be more creative and critical of their own work. Moreover, by

having two known authors sign the libretto, they made their creations more attractive to the public and impresarios (Versteeg 68). Both Munilla and Ferreiro followed the same pattern and published together several *zarzuela* librettos such as “La primera vara” (1897), “Las cigarreras” (1897) or “La golfa” (1908).

In “Las cigarreras” a group of female cigar makers in Madrid accept the offer of an English entrepreneur, Mr. Glomwi, to work in his British factory and learn how to operate his latest invention: cigar-making machines. Before travelling to England, Mr. Glomwi and the Madrilenian cigar-makers stop in Seville to recruit more *cigarreras*. However, when the female workers learn that the English businessman is actually planning to export his machines to Spanish factories, the *cigarreras* revolt. Right when the workers are about to attack Mr. Glomwi, he declares that his mechanization enterprise is not going to take place since he has fallen in love with a *cigarrera* from Seville and will remain loyal to the *cigarreras*’ interests.

Set in the cities of Madrid and Seville in 1897, this *zarzuela* locates the *cigarreras* in various public spaces, highlighting the spatialization of this working-class woman by representing her as a public character. The street and the factory—not the domestic space—were thus emblematically conceived as the primary fictional spaces where the *cigarrera* displayed her *castizo* personality. In particular, middle-class authors understood quarrelling and fighting in public as the essential characteristic of the *cigarrera*. Thus, it is in the street, right at the front entrance of the tobacco factory, where the *cigarrera* Remedios and her boyfriend, Frutos, are quarrelling in scene II.

Frutos argues with Remedios because his friend Gustavo has told him that Remedios lives the high life while Frutos receives very little money from her. Remedios

responds assertively that even though she has a good position at the factory, she hardly keeps any money due to Frutos' expenses. Once she leaves to go to work, Frutos realizes that Remedios is a fair woman and that Gustavo criticizes her because he is envious of Frutos having such a productive partner. He also realizes that Gustavo's woman, with a lower position at the same factory, cannot pay her debts and is forced to keep her child in an orphanage while Gustavo spends all the money on alcohol. Nonetheless, right after Frutos ponders his, he takes out the money that Remedios has given him and decides to go to the bar and drink until she gets off work.

As O'Connor mentions, *cigarreras* in *zarzuelas* were shown as "tak[ing] great pride in staying with [their man] through thick and thin and, above all, in supporting him financially" ("Representation" 164). Although it is not clear whether Remedios and Frutos are legally married—he describes his friend's woman as "esposa apócrifa" (10) which may refer to the fact that most of these couples had a relationship as husband and wife out of wedlock—Remedios has supported Frutos economically for years. In a society in which married women were expected to remain at home performing domestic roles and be maintained by their husbands, the opposite case was seen as an abnormality and as the total emasculation of the husband. Aware of that fact—"que yo no soy un mantecao / aunque seas mi sostén" (9)—when reminded by Remedios of his economic dependency on her, Frutos aims to restore his male prowess through sexist and violent threats: "porque a mí nadie me para / ¡vamos! te rompo la cara / en menos de un santiamén" (9).

The street also serves as the spatial frame where another *cigarrera*, Rita, and her boyfriend, Sabino, have an argument in scene IX. Similarly, it is in the workspace where

two cigarreras' argument turns into a catfight in scene VI. And finally, it is also in the street where the cigarreras protest and revolt against Mr. Glomwi in scenes XIV and XV.

The public quarrelling or fighting calls attention to the fact that "Las cigarreras" depicts a *castizo* and traditional working-class scene. The participants' behaviour rejects the dominant bourgeois conception of proper conduct, which relegated family or personal matters to the private sphere. In this sense, portraying working-class characters in this type of public behaviour in "Las cigarreras" follows a recurrent literary motif in *zarzuelas*: the portrayal of picturesque altercations in public spaces—whether the street or the workplace. These dialogues occur between working-class characters, in many instances, between female characters. Famous *zarzuelas* such as Ricardo de la Vega's *La verbena de la Paloma* (1907), Miguel Echegaráy's *Gigantes y cabezudos* (1898), and Miguel Ramos Carrión's *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente* (1897) are excellent examples of this phenomenon.

The theatrical representation of aggression among working-class characters in *género chico* accentuates the characters' 'natural' and 'inherent' physicality and instinctual behaviour as well as their closeness to the material qualities of the body in contrast to middle-class spirituality and intellect. Similarly, such 'uncontrollable' behaviour underlines the need on the part of the middle-class to keep the working-class under control, especially in end-of-the-century Spain where the emergence of working-class unionization and unrest threatened middle-class stability. However, in "Las cigarreras", female working-class aggression is conveniently relocated within a tamed and nationalized character embodied by the fictional *cigarreras*. By doing so, the *cigarreras'* public manifestation of aggression responds to a patriotic and *casticista*

motif. Such is the case, for instance, in the quarrel between Rita and Sabino in “Las cigarreras” in which the confrontation between the lovers helps (re)configure the *cigarrera*’s personality as patriotic.

Following the same dialogic structure as in the first public quarrel in the *zarzuela* between Remedios and Frutos, this other working-class couple’s row in scene IX serves to reinforce the traditional public persona of the *cigarrera* and her love partner. Although Rita complies with the idea of sustaining Sabino economically— ‘Dime, ¿quién te da pitillos? / ¿quién te da dinero?’ (22)—because she loves him, she does not accept any type of criticism about her trade and the women who belong to it. For this reason, when Sabino affirms that “no hay una cigarrera / que sea mujer de *conciencia*” (23), Rita defends the true character of the ‘cigarreras de España’ (23):

Nacida en humilde cuna,
vive pobre, pero honrada . . .
y se mata a trabajar
pa cobrar en las quincenas
unos perros indecentes,
que apenas si dan abasto
para sufragar el gasto
y mantener sus parientes. . . .
Ama a su patria querida
con cariño verdadero;
por ella da su dinero,
sus hijos, y hasta su vida. (23-4)

Therefore, apart from being a hardworking woman who provides for her man and her family, the *cigarrera* loves her mother country more than anything else.

Scene VI also confirms the association between the figure of the *cigarrera* and patriotism. Interestingly, the catfight between the two *cigarreras* at the workshop ends when Remedios mentions that there is a need to raise funds for a funfair to support the soldiers who are injured in Cuba. As O'Connor notes, in 1896 the Madrilenian *cigarreras* supported the war against the independence of Cuba in public demonstrations, incarnating in the social imaginary "traditional conceptions linking them to popular democracy and to the active defense of the country" ("Representation" 157). As a result, after listening to Remedios, every *cigarrera* contributes whatever she has to the Cuban cause in a display of solidarity, and Remedios closes the scene stating: "¡Olé ya las cigarreras! / Va a resultar la kermesse / la Gloria de España entera'. (18)

However, "Las cigarreras" further develops the association of the *castiza cigarrera* with the motherland and tradition when foreign modernity is introduced into the plot. Mr. Glomwi, a British entrepreneur, comes to the Madrilenian tobacco factory with the apparent intention of recruiting some *cigarreras* to work in England with a new cigar-making machine that he has invented. With the consent of the factory director, Mr. Glomwi attempts to talk to the *cigarreras* about his project. Yet, he is received with great suspicion and a sense of national superiority, even xenophobia, by the *cigarreras* in the workroom—"¡horror! viene un inglés..." (18)—especially by Remedios, who, as the cigar-maker master, acts as the representative of the other cigar makers. Before the Englishman explains his plans to the female workers, Remedios warns him that only "Si se trata del asunto / de una cuestión de su tierra" (19), will he be allowed to speak.

Otherwise, as her statement implies, a foreigner wanting to intervene in Spain's affairs should expect the *cigarreras*' rejection and scorn. Due to his condition as a foreigner, Mr. Glomwi is divested of any authority through language, emphasizing the workers' superiority before the foreign inventor.

Once Remedios grants him permission to talk, Mr. Glomwi proceeds to tell the female workers that he intends to take five *cigarreras* to England to work with a new cigar-making machine, which "hace unos cigarillos / que a los más listos engaña" (19). Believing that Mr. Glomwi's enterprise only pertains to manufacturing tobacco in England, the *cigarreras* feel enthusiastic about migrating to a foreign country to earn better salaries. Thus, whereas the traditional Spanish system of tobacco production remains untouched, the episode allows for a certain level of association between foreign capital and modernity and the Spanish workforce.

Nonetheless, the *cigarreras*' excitement about working abroad ends in Seville where Mr. Glomwi wants to recruit other cigar-makers. When the *cigarreras* learn that Mr. Glomwi plans to install his machines in several tobacco factories in the main cities of Spain, the fierce character of the *cigarreras* explodes, as expressed by the stage directions: "*Gritería infernal, producida por "Las cigarreras", y estruendo de cristales rotos. Grupos de cigarreras por distintos lados, con el cabello en desorden y jadeantes*" (37). The way in which the *cigarreras* are described, which signals unleashed female energy, is another reminder of the potential threat of the working-class masses in general. In the libretto, though, their aggressiveness is justified and conveniently channelled to defend a patriotic cause in order to keep alive the *castizo* essence. These *Spanish* women will not allow the colonization of the Spanish market and destruction of more traditional

ways of production by foreign capital and technology. The *cigarreras* believe that Mr. Glomwi's machines threaten to destroy the *cigarreras* only source of income: their manual labor. Thus, they shout:

¡Abajo las máquinas!

.....

Yo os juro que el Mister morirá en mis manos!

.....

A esos pillos extranjeros
los tenemos que enseñar
pa que sepan que en España
no nos pueden engañar. (30)

As Pamela Candela Soto mentions, the mechanization of the production of tobacco in Spain was mainly postponed until the beginning of the twentieth century by “la resistencia del personal obrero, que veía en las máquinas una amenaza a sus puestos de trabajos” (84). In this sense, the libretto of “Las cigarreras” shares the *cigarreras*’ preoccupations and echoes “el apoyo de la opinión pública” (Candela Soto 84), which the *cigarreras* enjoyed in their struggle against mechanization.

It should be noted that, even though the *cigarreras* are defending a traditional form of production, their discourse is founded on a modern conception of the working class, labor, and the means of production. The clash between the worker and industrial mechanization was a controversial topic by the end of the nineteenth century. Thanks to the introduction of Marxist texts into Spain during the early 1870s, the working class grew more aware of the social discrimination and labor exploitation to which workers

were subjected. Indeed, the spread of Marxist ideology at this time reinforced the formation of a new sense of community and group cohesion among the workers, giving way to a proletarian consciousness, which in “Las cigarreras” is represented by women. Through gender and class identification with other *cigarreras*, all the Madrilenian women working in the cigar-making trade acquire a female class-consciousness that motivates them to defend the rights of the collective. Therefore, in the *zarzuela*, the *cigarreras* prefer to fight and die “pa que no se mueran de hambre nuestras pobres compañeras” (30).

Yet, as portrayed in the following stanzas, their unified resistance proves to be fluctuating and elusive in contrast to the female workers’ real labor struggles and determination. As Capel Martínez has pointed out

La pasividad que en general mantienen las trabajadoras de otros sectores en la reivindicación de sus derechos, sólo rota en situaciones límites, no existe entre las operarias tabaqueras. Antes al contrario, la combatitividad va a constituir uno de sus rasgos más característicos, junto con el desarrollo de un fuerte sentimiento de solidaridad. (*Trabajo* 150)

In “Las cigarreras,” all the rage and group commitment to the female working class vanishes when Mr. Glomwi informs them that he is going to marry Micaela, an Andalusian *cigarrera* he has just met in Seville. He will not be bringing his machines to Spain. A festive atmosphere predominates then in the last scene, and the whole group celebrates the news in a typical Andalusian fair. This scene is probably reinforced with music associated with Andalusia in the collective imaginary, which helps neutralize the political implications of the *cigarreras*’ struggle. Such fluctuating construction of the

female worker and her struggle is also emphasized in the depiction of the cigarreras' workspace in the third scene. A choir of cigarreras at work open the scene singing about their labor. In spite of the fact that they complain about their hard work at first, the mellifluous and romantic overtones of the two final stanzas idealizes the character of the cigarrera, making her previous complaints about her labor fade away in the folletinesque lyrics:

. . . Las labores nos piden
muy especiales,
y aluego se nos paga
con cuatro riales.

. . . Dí a tu dueño que lleva
fiel el cigarrito,
el amor de mi alma
y mi cariño

. . . que aquí va mi amor,
en pedazos pequeños
de mi corazón! (15-6).

As part of the desire to find and define Spanishness, it was not unusual to encounter allegorizations of geographical landmarks in the nineteenth-century *zarzuela*. According to Versteeg, these allegorizations followed a 17th-century tradition in the *entremés* where actors and actresses would embody different Madrilenian streets (231). Those personifications helped increase the audience's familiarity and closeness to the story when they saw well-known spatial cultural referents. In "Las Cigarreras" the place

chosen to end the play is important for Seville—and Andalusia—was considered since the Romantic period as the geographical site where the Spanish character was more alive through its customs and people (Álvarez Junco 94-5). In addition, and taking into account that *género chico* and its *zarzuelas* were grounded in the comedy genre, the audience expected a festive and happy ending. So, the role played by the Andalusian setting serves both purposes: to finish the performance in a light manner and to (re)create the *castizo* essence of Spanish society. Indeed, it is an actress dressed up as a tobacco factory who closes the last scene with a song. Representing the character of the *cigarrera*, the tobacco factory claims the importance of her contribution to the “beauty” of Spain since the *cigarrera* is “de España / la nata y flor” (33). This idea is further underlined by the lyrics of her song and her movements and demeanour on stage: while the stage directions emphasize her sensuous bodily movements (“contoneándose”), her sung dialogue also calls attention to her sensuous and attractive bodily performance:

. . . con estas hechuras
y estos andares
a toitos los hombres
les doy achares. (34)

The orientalization of the *cigarrera* as a sexualized Andalusian working-class woman is thus presented to the audience.

Despite the fact that the libretto falls into a stereotyped representation of the *cigarrera*, it also brings to the forefront an alternative encoding of gender and class, doing away with the politics of invisibility that female workers suffered from as contributors to the Spanish economy. This message comes across when we consider the

manner in which males are represented: all males, regardless of their class and nationality, are economically dependent on women in this *zarzuela*. The director of the factory, although in a position of power in the capitalist structure, could not maintain his economic and social status without the *cigarreras*' labor power. Likewise, Mr. Glomwi, as a foreign businessman, needs female workers to work his machines and make his enterprise succeed.

Working-class men receive an even more negative portrayal, which emphasizes the text's class bias. Low-class Spanish men are represented as lazy, opportunistic, deceitful, abusive, and violent. Above all, these male characters display an aggressive form of masculinity linked to physical violence, which functions to mask their sense of inferiority and impotence, deriving from their economic dependence on women. Thus, *cigarreras* are the economic core of men's stability, from the factory owner or Mr. Glomwi to the boyfriend or husband. Without female workers and their labor, the Spanish economy and European capitalist colonialism would not have been sustained.

1.3. Fantasy Worlds and Chameleonic Identities: The Modern Working-Class Cinderella in Martínez Sierra's "La suerte de Isabelita" (1911)

Despite the fact that *zarzuela* was "mass produced," which raised concerns among music and literary critics about the aesthetic value and quality of such works (Deleito y Piñuela 4-5; Versteeg 6-9), some prestigious and well-known writers composed their librettos within the *zarzuela* genre. Such is the case with the feminist activist and prolific playwright María Lejárraga, also known as María Martínez Sierra. For years her husband, Gregorio Martínez Sierra, was believed to be the author of hundreds of dramas and essays, while Lejárraga was seen as his occasional collaborator. However, the research

conducted by critics such as Alda Blanco and Patricia W. O'Connor supported by Lejárraga's autobiographical books and personal letters effectively show that she was her husband's collaborator in most of his literary production and in many instances the sole author.⁵ Thanks to Lejárraga's creativity and genius, "Gregorio's" dramas and librettos were acclaimed not only in his own country, Spain, but also internationally, and to this day she is the only known prolific Spanish female *zarzuela* playwright of her time. Interestingly, although female characters are a central to most *zarzuela* plots, there were very few female authors who wrote *zarzuela* librettos. Some exceptional cases are María del Pilar Contreras y Alba de Rodríguez, Rosa María Gálvez de Cabrera or the prestigious Concepción Arenal. Nonetheless, their *zarzuela* production is very scarce especially when compared to María Martínez Sierra's. Lacking pertinent information to decide who the actual author of "La suerte" was, I will use "Martínez Sierra" to refer to both authors as collaborating in the authorship of this play.

As in "Las cigarreras", the articulation of *castizo* femininity within the new socioeconomic parameters brought about by the turn-of-the-century modernity is also crucial to Martínez Sierra's *zarzuela* libretto "La suerte de Isabelita." Staged in Madrid in the year 1911, "La suerte" pays special attention to the working-class woman and her role in the confrontation between the foreign and the autochthonous, on the one hand, and capitalism and traditional attitudes towards labor on the other.

Isabelita, a *castizo* female worker who makes plastic flowers and arrangements, wins the lottery one day. Unlike her co-workers, Isabelita decides to invest all her money on a luxurious tour of Europe, visiting Paris and the Alps. During her trip, she meets

⁵ See Blanco's edition of María Martínez Sierra's *Gregorio y yo. Medio siglo de colaboración* and O'Connor's *Gregorio y María Martínez Sierra: Crónica de una colaboración*.

young and prosperous Juanito, a Madrilenian tradesman. They fall in love but, when Isabelita confesses her humble origins, he decides not to marry her. Disappointed and without any money left, the flower maker decides to go back to her old job. The same day she returns to her workplace, Juanito appears miraculously and asks her to marry him, giving the *zarzuela* a happy-ending.

The first and last scenes of “La suerte” take place in a Madrilenian workshop where the main *castiza* character, Isabelita, and other girls make artificial flowers and flower arrangements. The workshop presents a clear gender, class, and national division in terms of space: the autochthonous Madrilenian female workers labor in the workshop while the Belgian boss, León, works in his office. The play emphasizes the solidarity among the female workers, a bond formed on similarities in gender, class, and national origin. At the same time, the spatial division at the workshop runs parallel to the division between two ways of understanding capital and labor: that which encapsulates the national Spanish character and that which symbolizes Northern Europe’s capitalist orientation.

León, as a representative of the Northern European nations, aims to make the girls work with the discipline and focus expected in his country, but looking at the festive atmosphere among the workers, he finds to his dismay that they remain utterly “Spanish”: “¡Este país es insoportable! Se entra en el taller, la una obrera se ríe la otra canta, la otra no ha venido, las azucenas sin forro, la corona sin terminar... ¡Éste es un país perdido!” (7). Meanwhile, the employees “se ríen por lo bajo” (5), pulling León’s leg on any occasion. However, the protagonist, Isabelita, is the one who shows greater command over her own boss. To start with, Isabelita’s conceptualization of work and capital greatly

differs from León's, defining her as a 'Spanish' worker. For example, she does not follow work timetables as strictly as León would like, and in the first scene, she shows up late for work. Although she expects to earn half of her wages that day, she does not show any concern about her lack of work discipline. Fortunately, that same day Isabelita wins the lottery and without hesitation quits her job and decides to spend all her money living the high life. Before she leaves, León tells her that winning money in the lottery is an immoral practice because "no hay más dinero legítimo que el que se gana con el sudor" (17). Yet, Isabelita, clever and sarcastic as she is portrayed, completes his statement claiming that León gathers his "dinero legítimo" "[c]on el sudor del prójimo, ¿eh?" (17). Thus, Isabelita manifests a modern class-consciousness with Marxist undertones: she understands the capitalist economic system in which the capitalist increases his wealth at the expense of the workers' labor while the latter enjoy little economic and social power.

When León advises her to let him keep her lottery money so that she can earn "un interés del seis por ciento" while continuing to work, Isabelita prefers to *enjoy* her money to the fullest far away from the rationale of capitalist investments and *sacrifice*: "Muchas gracias...*por el interés*; prefiero el capital" (17). Thus, whereas León believes that "[l]abour is not merely an economic means [but] a spiritual end" (Tawney 3), the girl's attitude towards wealth resembles that of the *castizo* for whom the enjoyment of life predominates over the accumulation of capital through personal sacrifice.

The protagonist shows further command over her employer when she returns to the workshop from her two-month holiday and requests the job she had left. Far from behaving in a pitiful or regretful manner, Isabelita asks for the job confidently and, with an assertive comment on her boss' doubts—"Conque no hay más que hablar" (49),—she

reclaims her old post. León agrees to hire her for one single reason: “porque es usted una buena obrera” (49). So, in spite of Isabelita’s disorganization and free mind typical of a *castiza* worker, León rehires her because her labor power is profitable for his capitalist endeavors and goals. He feels compelled to do this despite his continuous critique of Spanish traditional customs. The libretto highlights that the “Spanish” conceptualization of labor, as represented by the girl’s work, does not necessarily exclude efficiency and productivity, thus resisting the stereotyped conceptualization of Spanish people as lazy.

At the same time, Isabelita and her co-workers understand that the female worker’s life and future are challenging and bleak. Meager salaries, long hours of work, and no hope to improve one’s economic situation offer a dark picture of their existence. The author(s) acknowledge(s) this idea in the libretto⁶: “¡Esta vida que lleva una es tan perra! Trabajar como negras para no ganar nada; comer mal, vestir peor, destrozarse las manos para que otras lleven flores en el gorro, aguantar al musíu en el obrador y a la familia en casa” (12-3).

In this respect, Geraldine Scanlon underscores the lack of hygiene, hard toil, and health problems that flower makers endured because they had to perform “[la] fabricación de flores con riesgo de envenenamiento con el arsénico de los colorantes” (89). Additionally, marriage does not seem to offer a better alternative to their condition, for they will marry “otro infeliz . . . para tener media docena de hijos y pasar miseria” since wealthy young men “aunque la hagan a una el amor, se casan con la otra . . . la que les hace gestos por detrás del visillo [y a la que no] dejan los papás sola” (30).

⁶ Some years after writing this libretto, María Martínez Sierra wrote a series of essays in which she struggled to improve working women’s labor conditions. See, for instance, *Cartas a las mujeres de España* (1916) or *La mujer moderna* (1920).

To evade her harsh reality, Isabelita becomes a compulsive liar constructing alternative imaginary spaces nourished by her consumption of popular end-of-the-century *folletines*. She creates fantasy worlds with luxury and rich suitors, and as she tells her coworkers, displaying her optimism: “¿Qué va a hacer una? ¿Pensar en los trabajos que pasa, para que todavía le parezcan más negros? ¡Más vale figurarse los buenos ratos que le podían haber caído en suerte!” (13). Looking for alternative spaces in order to escape her reality, Isabelita decides to spend all her lottery money on a tour abroad advertised in a newspaper.

In the libretto, modernity does not only come in the shape of a foreign capitalist system of production or the commodification of literature that Isabelita consumes in *folletines*, but it is also present in the emergence of the press and its mass production and consumption. In particular, the appearance of tour packages in newspapers was related to the construction of a national consciousness. Benedict Anderson contends that the emergence and commodification of the press during the mid-nineteenth century produced an “imagined community” in which readers would share the same news and hence, acquire a sense of belonging to the same nation (30-73). Consequently, when readers read commercials of tour packages to travel abroad in newspapers, they were interpellated to believe in the nation-building process through national differentiation. In this manner, and following Enloe’s perception of tourism, in “La suerte” “[t]ourism is as much ideology as physical movement” (28). Thus, Isabelita reinforces her belonging to the Spanish community through its differentiation from and opposition to the “exotic” nations that she will visit in the tour. According to the tour advertisement, the traveler will enjoy “las más puras emociones artísticas . . . entre gratas emociones y placeres

inefables”. “La suerte” reverses the traditional terms of the orientalization of Spain through which European travelers, anxious to find new sensations and indescribable experiences, configured Spain as an exotic destiny. In “La suerte” European countries turn out to be the ones described as exotic spaces ready to be discovered by the Spanish traveler.

As previously seen, the turn-of-the-century newspaper was a site of consumption through advertising: it acted as a locus of commodification and as a shopping window for modern commodities. It is not surprising that Isabelita is interpellated by the modern and “sophisticated marketing techniques” found in newspapers that “promot[ed] repertoires of identities and lifestyles to which the consumer was encouraged to aspire” (Felski, *Gender of Modernity* 64). Hence, once traveling and in a foreign space, *castiza* Isabelita enjoys her new life to the fullest, experiencing the riches of the wealthy. As she leaves behind her working-class preoccupations, her experience of a commodified foreign space allows her to create an alternative imaginary world in which she adopts a new identity as a marchioness through her recently-acquired capacity to spend. Through consumerism, one of the modern practices at the turn of the century “publicly acknowledged as a legitimate . . . form of wanting” for women (Felski, *Gender of Modernity* 65), Isabelita finds a way to exert power and channel her desire to escape her working-class reality. Furthermore, Isabelita erases the unstable and contingent limits of class differentiation through her appropriation of social signs and codes: the use of luxurious clothes, the purchase of exquisite foods, and her participation in an elite tour. The flower maker successfully occupies the social space reserved for the higher classes in the social imaginary of the time, allowing her to reconstruct her identity according to her

expectations as a desiring subject. Such chameleonic ability to imitate the higher classes by certain characters in nineteenth-century Spanish literature has already been noted by critics such as Akiko Tsuchiya, Paul Julian Smith, and Elena Delgado, especially in regards to the character of Rosalía de Bringas in Galdos' work. In particular, Delgado highlights not only the subjective consequences of the appropriation of certain prevailing codes by Rosalía, but also the social transgression associated with this appropriation that signals "un proceso de nivelación social que amenaza el status quo y proclama la inestabilidad de los códigos que delimitan la separación de las clases sociales" (66). In "La suerte," Isabelita's adoption of such signs and codes is even more transgressive because, in contrast to Rosalia, the class "bridge" that the flower maker has to cross is even greater as a working-class woman.

The modern and *castizo* character of Isabelita is also highlighted through her sexuality. In spite of the fact that Isabelita roams the urban space on the tour as a modern *flaneuse* and interacts with male foreigners, she exemplifies the proper Spanish female's sexual morality as she rejects all her foreign suitors' advances. Indeed, when thinking of possible romantic partners, neither a French nor an English suitor—described as "tipos de caricatura" (24) by the scene annotations—gains her heart, and Isabelita knows exactly what she desires: "corazón, uno; uno solo español...y no entender más que una lengua: la mía española, ¿eh?" (26). By stating so, Isabelita discards her foreign admirers because they are too different from her, both in language, customs, and nationality. The idea that her heart is "solo español" implies that she can only love a Spanish man, because otherwise she would be betraying her sense of nationhood. Her discourse reveals how her romantic feelings and her attachment to Spain coalesce, constructing her as the

“signifier of ethnic/national differences” within the Spanish nation-building project presented in “La suerte”. At the same time, Isabelita’s sexual decency is emphasized when she detaches herself from the myth of Carmen and dismantles her foreign suitors’ idea about Spanish female identity. Although her suitors expect her to “bailar fandango . . . en la liga llevar la nava[j]a, . . . beber la mansanilia [y] tocar la castañeta” (25) as Bizet’s Carmen would do, Isabelita subverts that European image of the Andalusian Spanish woman, and establishes her own narrative about her *castizo* and autochthonous background from Madrid: “Yo bailo chotis y polkas / a compas de un organillo; / . . . soy alegre, soy honrada...”(25). It is also important to notice the paradoxical contradiction in Isabelita’s self-definition as an authentic working-class girl from Madrid when stating that she does not dance fandangos but “chotis” and “polkas,” two types of musical and dance expressions of foreign origins. The former originates from Scotland (Alier 63) and the latter possibly from the Czeck lands (“polka”) during the nineteenth century.

Not surprisingly, Isabelita falls in love with Juanito, a wealthy trader from Madrid who participates in the same tour. Young, attractive, rich, and Madrilenian, Juanito holds the qualities that Isabelita seeks in a man. However, there is an apparently insurmountable problem: the girl’s social class. When, at the end of the tour, Juanito learns that Isabelita is not a Marchioness as she had told him, he feels cheated and takes back his wedding proposition. Isabelita realizes his desire to marry the marchioness, not the attractive, friendly girl, and she criticizes this superficial love for her. She pessimistically closes the third scene with an exclamation full of sarcasm— “¡Quién le mandaba a una haber nacido pobre!” (42), thus ending her mental and physical self-displacement to an imaginary world.

Back to her “space” and social class, as the text underlines, Isabelita “[ha] vuelto a ser proletari[a]” (49). But as part of the aesthetic requirements of *género chico*, “La suerte” cannot conclude with such a pessimistic ending. Thus, Juanito appears at Isabelita’s workplace and asks her to marry him. Then, they celebrate by inviting everybody to a luxurious dinner. Therefore, the Madrilenian Cinderella sees her dream of a better life come true, and the narrative achieves a happy-ever-after conclusion.

However, if the narrative of “La suerte” transgresses class and gender social hierarchies by locating Isabelita in the axis of modernity and consumption, the end of the story perpetuates the social order established by dominant class and gender discourses of the time. If the story were to continue, this fairy-tale narrative closure would be problematic, for by marrying Juanito, Isabelita will rise in social class and occupy a different social realm, that of the bourgeoisie. Here her freedom of movement will be seriously restricted; the freedom she has enjoyed so much as an independent working-class woman will disappear. Following behavioral patterns expected of a woman of her new social class, Isabelita will have to comply with the role of the angel of the hearth and home, inhabiting the domestic space and occupying the public only when she is chaperoned. Although her assimilation into the middle-class implies a renunciation of her economic independence, it is important not to forget that her marriage to Juanito will free her from the life of toil and hardship usually experienced by working-class women.

1.4. Female Worker’s Public Counterspaces in Carlos Arniches’ “Los Pasionales” (1915)

Carlos Arniches became one of the most renowned and prolific zarzuela and drama authors at the turn of the 20th century. He was soon to demonstrate in his literary

career a special talent for synthesizing appealing stories in well-balanced one or two-act humorous plays. His command of the portrayal of Madrid's working-class and its language gave him the recognition of "el padre del sainete moderno" (Zurita qtd. in Ramos 91).

Although born in Alicante (a Spanish city on the Mediterranean coast) into a middle-class family, the author felt a great attachment to the city of Madrid and its inhabitants where he arrived as a young man. These first years in the Spanish capital were far from easy for the young author, however. After a dispute with his aunt, his economic benefactor at the time, Arniches found himself without income or a place to live. Thanks to a friend, the author went to live with a working-class family in a very modest house. His personal experience living with this family and his interaction with other working-class people in the neighborhood had a strong impact on the way he was to recreate the fictional working-class world in his work and determined his great success among both the middle-class and the working-class public.

The relationship between Arniches and his public is quite interesting, in fact. On the one hand, the author carefully observed the customs and language of the Madrilenian lower class while he lived among them. Later on, when he achieved a higher economic status, Arniches took on the role of *flâneur* almost as a job, walking in the working-class neighborhoods and visiting their taverns every day. However, in contrast to other famous *flâneurs* of the Madrilenian urban geography such as Mesonero Romanos or José de Larra, Arniches felt a special connection and admiration—perhaps even a patronizing attitude—for the inhabitants of the less privileged areas of the city whom he saw as kind, persevering and hardworking. Arniches, more than a mere observer detached from the

urban scene like most *flâneurs*, took an active part in working-class social life, especially through his conversations with the neighbors in the taverns. This immersion in the life of the popular class in Madrid allowed the writer to recreate the *tipos* and language that he had just encountered and studied in the Madrilenian streets.

Indeed, a symbiosis developed between his literary creation and the public. Not only did he incorporate and reinvent numerous working-class elements in his plays, but the working class audience also adopted many of these new cultural recreations itself as part of its identity, a process described by Vicente Ramos as “la arnichesización de Madrid” and “la madrileñización de Arniches” (151). Such is the case of the language used by many of Arniches’ working-class characters. As a good *costumbrista* writer, Arniches aimed to reproduce the puns, mispronounced words and expressions that he had encountered during his interaction with the lower class. In addition, he created new words and expressions that, in turn, were adopted by the working-class public (Ramos 152). A similar process is the adoption of working-class *tipos*’ attitudes, gestures and characteristics by the working-class audience (Ramos 151-2).

From early on, Arniches demonstrated a special sensibility in portraying human themes. His work manifests the author’s exploration of human feelings and his awareness of many pressing social issues of the time. However, many of his critics, singularly pointing out the aesthetics of humor in his plays, often ignored the politics of his creation (Ramos 113, Amorós 13, Monleón 154). Clearly, his classification as a *género chico* writer by critics, not only veiled Arniches’ innovative aesthetic talent as a playwright but also the social critique that he aimed to transmit through his work. In this manner, in minimizing the sociohistorical context in which the work was framed, critics overlooked

Arniches' original contribution to the *constumbrista* genre. By doing so, critics implemented what Monleón has defined as a “sistemática deshistorización” of the literary work, turning Spain into a superficial “pasividad estética” inhabited by a stereotyped working-class (Monleón 157) and failing to observe the social critique and *regeneracional* purpose in his sainetes. In fact, according to José Monleón:

Un grave mal español es para Arniches nuestro ánimo chirigotero. . . . Arniches se hubiera sentido avergonzado si, al hacer un examen de su obra, se le confundiese con uno de nuestros autores simplemente divertidos de finales de siglo. . . . A Arniches . . . le irrita esa combinación de broma e indiferencia social que ahoga las posibilidades de un examen crítico y un desarrollo colectivo español. (153)

The author, indeed, had envisioned a concrete political agenda in the fabrication of his plays as he himself stated: “Aspiro sólo con mis sainetes y farsas a estimular las condiciones generosas del pueblo y hacerle odiosos los malos instintos” (qtd. in Ramos 6). His goal followed an old saying practiced by writers centuries before: *ridendo corrigit mores* or entertaining the public while teaching social morals and customs. His desire was to expose the vices and injustices he found in society making a social statement about what behaviors had to be corrected or praised. Having a high regard for work and honesty, the idle, the envious, or the violent character usually has a bad ending in his plays. By contrast, the humble, the hardworking, and the honest often enjoys a happy reward.

There is no doubt that, from his position as a middle-class author, he professed a patronizing attitude towards the working class and envisioned himself as the teacher of

the people. However, Arniches' social criticism was not common in humorous sainetes by other authors of this time. His sainetes indeed evolved to the so-called *tragedia grotesca* or *farsa cómica*, a play in which both drama and humor coexist, placing his work closer to Valle Inclán's *esperpentos*. Thus, while humor was an essential constituent in Arniches' plays, the grotesque—the pathetic, the sad and the ridiculous—transcended the humorous tone of many zarzuelas of the period. Although Arniches' sainetes followed the basic constitutive elements of *costumbrismo* (*tipo* characters, brief plots and humoristic dialogues filled with popular expressions and turns of phrase, etc.), during his period of maturity he also portrayed Madrid's dark side through his tragic comedies. Downtrodden neighborhoods, poverty, violence, corrupt laws and sexism, for instance, are intrinsic elements to the conception of these plays. This is the case of one of his most popular collections of sainetes titled *Del Madrid castizo*, originally published individually in the magazine "Blanco y Negro" from 1915 to 1916. If the author defined them as *sainetes rápidos* or "quick sainetes" associating them with the literary tradition of *género chico*, these sainetes also

[m]arcan, en cierta medida, la crisis del populismo cómico y simpático del autor, probablemente porque toma clara conciencia de las miserias de nuestro Madrid castizo. . . . Es evidente la distancia que existe entre este Madrid popular, casi barojiano, y la estampa festiva y botijera de un día de San Isidro. O entre la picaresca y la gracia y el melodramatismo de los *chulos* del barrio de Lavapiés. (Monleón 159)

For the purpose of my analysis, I have chosen one of these *sainetes rápidos* in which female labor and the construction of public spaces by female workers are central to

the construction of Arniches' aesthetic and ideological agenda. I am talking about the *sainete* "Los pasionales," published in 1915 in the magazine "Blanco y Negro." "Los pasionales" manifests the literary peculiarities of the *género chico*: short extension, *tipo* characters like Paco el Metralla or Gumersindo, popular language and *castizo* spaces such as the Madrilenian street, the *verbena* ("open-air dance") or the female workshop. In fact, as studied below, the female workshop, together with the street and the public dance are configured in this *sainete* as what Nancy Fraser has termed "subaltern counterpublics [or] parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, so as to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser 14).

The story of "Los pasionales" revolves around Paco's encounter with his friend Gumersindo in the street, Paco's recollection of his relationship with ironer Nieves, his ex-girlfriend, and the *esperpéntico* and humorous outcome of Gumersindo's advice to Paco to get back his ex-lover. It begins with Paco el Metralla arriving at the street where Nieves works at an ironing workshop. Even though the scene takes place in the streets of a "Madrid castizo y jaranero" (93), Paco el Metralla, the main character in the diegetic level of the story, is described not as an attractive, cunning and mischievous character—the prototype of the *chulo madrileño*—but rather as "un jovenzuelo de mediana estatura, enteco, amarillo, de mirada cínica" (93) with bad intentions. Certainly, Paco is still presented as a very cocky character—"muy compuesto, con su traje flamante, sus botas de caña, su corbatita de nudo y su gorrilla inglesa" (93)—but his attitude towards women and his ridiculous performance of masculinity, especially at the end of the *sainete*, portray him as un *chulo tragicómico*, bordering on the pathetic.

In the same manner, the construction of another character, Gumersindo, “el *Chulo* de Postas, menos joven, pero peor encarado y más cínico” (94) and his dialogic interaction with Paco help bring to light a chauvinist male bonding between both characters. Thus, Paco explains to Gumersindo how Nieves has ended their eight-month relationship and has thrown him out of her house. Paco is not happy because thanks to her wages, he had enjoyed a comfortable economic position. However, things have changed. From Paco’s perspective, Nieves is an ungrateful woman after “all” he has done for her:

. . . después de ocho meses de relaciones, que me ha tenío hecho una oveja, sacándola a paseos y cines cuando l’ha dao la gana y haciéndola el favor de llevarla a mi diestra: después de tenerme sacrificao, que me dice: ‘No mires a ninguna’, y tengo que mirar de reajo: después que me compra una corbata y me la tengo que poner aunque no me guste... (95)

The most striking is not the fact that Paco considers taking Nieves out to the cinema and for walks and letting him hold his arm as a sacrifice, but how he understands the economic-emotional relationship with her:

Paco el Metralla: . . . ¡y encima (y esto es lo más horrible) que me he gastao con ella un dineral!...

Gumersindo: ¿Sobre cuánto?

Paco el Metralla: Pos tóo lo que me ha dao en los ocho meses pa que se lo guardara y tres pesetas mías. (95)

He is also angry because he spent all his money on her, money that, ironically, she had previously given him from her monthly income—“cuatro cochinos duros semales

que gana, que me cuesta un triunfo sacárselos” (95). Obviously, for Paco, Nieves’ justification for finishing their relationship is ridiculous. As he tells his friend Gumersindo: “la llevo el sábado al baile de Provisiones, . . . y porque al entrar me distraigo media hora en el guardarropa con la Piñones, va, se atufa, se mete en el salón y se me pone a bailar con el Petaca” (95). Thus, when Paco comes back to the dance area and sees his girlfriend dancing with another man, he takes her out to the street and “le peg[ó] una bofetá que l[e] salt[ó] un diente” (96).

After this encounter at the ball, Paco tells Gumersindo that he has tried to approach her on different occasions but she was able to avoid him until their last encounter. On this last occasion, Paco sees her dancing with another man in a verbena. Furious, Paco starts a fight with Nieves’ partner, and then flees the scene in fear.

Listening with attention to Paco, Gumersindo shows himself to be a sympathetic friend. He understands Paco’s difficult situation—“Si me ha pasao a mí la mar de veces (97)” —and despises women’s “despotic” attitude: “¡Qué graciosas! Toas lo mismo. De seguida quien acabar . . . y el hombre que ya tié arreglao sus gastos al jornal que le gana una mujer, que se chinche, ¿verda?” (96). For both lazy men, women not only have to respect the codes of female honor—being faithful to their man,— but they also need to provide economically for them even when the women no longer desire to do so. Now that Nieves rejects Paco, he asks for advice from the more experienced Gumersindo who reminds the young man that Nieves’ conduct is harming both his honor and his wallet. Thus, according to the old *chulo*, Paco has to proceed as follows:

. . . la aguardas esta noche, y de que salga, la llamas y la planteas el problema en esta forma: ‘Apreciable nincha: U sigues las relaciones

amorosas con un servidorito, u te doy dos tajos en el rostro. A escoger.’

¿Que te dice que sí? Pues, dominada ya por el miedo, haces cuenta que te has compraó una burra. ¿Que se emperra en que no? Pues tiras de navajita y la cortas la cara. Ni más ni menos. (98)

Paco wonders whether he would go to jail if he harms Nieves. The experienced *chulo* assures Paco that he will not have any problem since he has already done the same with another woman, Enriqueta, and “como era crimen pasional, a los dos meses, asolvido” (98). Thus, Gumersindo states that even though Paco might go to prison until the trial takes place, he will be released soon after. According to Gumersindo, the jury that judged him during the trial was formed by “El señor Pepe el Bocas, Quintín el Churrero; el señor Serapio el Orejas, Custodio el de la Leoncia, Valentín el Zapa... Tóos amigos” (99).

Considering that at this time in Spain, the jury members of the so-called Tribunal popular (popular court) could be only officially comprised of respectable middle-class men, it is striking that Gumersindo’s friends, all belonging to “el elemento vinatero” (99), form the jury. But Gumersindo clarifies that “a los caballeros les gusta que haiga Juraó, peao no quien ir, ¿sabes?, y cuando les toca, pos, pa no molestarse, delegan por las cinco pesetas en una colección de sustitutos, del comercio de esta corte, que vagan por las Salesas a lo que cae” (99). Therefore, one can imagine how easy it was for the jury to sympathize with Gumersindo’s justification for his crime: “los celos me habían puesto una venda sanguinolenta en los ojos; que la navaja me se había venido sola a la mano, y que al cometer el delito me pasó una cosa pasional por el cranio, que yo no sabía si estaba jugando a la brisca o dando puñalás” (99).

He is judged innocent by his friends and the judge on the grounds of his “blind passion,” a passion that drove him to act out of his mind and induced him to mark Enriqueta’s face for life. His confession of regret is so well performed that he is judged innocent, highlighting the masculine camaraderie between the accused and the members of the jury. In total, as Gumersindo himself puts it:

sentencia asolutoria, la Enriqueta lisiada pa toa su vida y yo con un cartelito entre las damas desde que salí de la cárcel, que aquí me tienes: vestido, calzao, fumao, comido, bebido, ecétera, ecétera... Porque dime tú: después de aquello, ¿qué desgraciada le niega a un servidor cinco duros, aunque tenga que sacárselos al Ayuntamiento? (100)

The conversation between Gumersindo and Paco clearly illustrates the author’s social denunciation of an issue which is especially current in today’s Spain: domestic violence and the legal protection of abused women. In this fashion, Arniches was ahead of his time, bringing to public attention the precarious performance of the Spanish legal system which did not condemn and punish domestic violence against working-class women. It is true that the reading of Arniches’ story could be deceptive since the reader might be led to think that domestic violence only took place in unmarried couples within a working-class context. The truth is that domestic violence has always happened across social classes. Nonetheless, the dominant bourgeois discourse of the time, in which Arniches’ text participates, associated domestic physical violence with the working class. Since the middle-classes defined themselves as rational and aimed to disassociate themselves from the body, physical violence was dismissed as a possibility in the representation of the bourgeois home.

On the other hand, it is laudable that a male author advocated against domestic violence. In this fashion, both Gumersindo and Paco el Metralla are lazy and opportunistic men whose main tool to achieve what they want is physical and psychological violence against women. Thus, Paco's nickname "el metralla"—the shrapnel—designates the masculine image that he aims to project in a working-class society in order to obtain social status earned by an association with potential violence. It is not surprising that when he sees Nieves dancing with another man, his first reaction is that of slapping her and "saltar[le] un diente" (96). Furthermore, after Nieves was slapped and ceased her relationship with him, he stalks her across from the workshop—right before he meets Gumersindo—and threatens her by his menacing bodily presence and aggressive gaze. When he notices that his intimidation is not working, he threatens to beat her so badly that she will have to go to the hospital: "¡Pa que no vayas a la Casa de Socorro esta noche...! No tendría yo lacha. Tú saldrás" (94).

The close bonding between male honor and dignity and the practice of violence against women is also a driving force in the construction of Gumersindo's character. He not only advises Paco to use physical violence to coerce women to his desires, but he has actually carried out such an act against one of them, Enriqueta. The female body then becomes a violated space on which the language of male violence is inscribed. Scarring a woman's face for life is quite representative of how the mechanisms of male violence against women worked at that time. In a society where the construction of women's sense of worth is mostly attained through their physical appearance, the disfiguring of a woman's face implies a direct attack on the woman's self-esteem. The damage is even greater for women who live in patriarchal societies where marriage is the only way to

survive economically and obtain social status. Although this is not Enriqueta's case, for she already earns her own income, it is true that by disfiguring her face, Gumersindo probably makes her less attractive to other men. He marks her for life or "brands" her as his possession, as well as instills in her a feeling of shame and fear.

While the working-class men in this sainete are represented as violent and idle following middle-class stereotypes, bourgeois male characters are far from being positively portrayed. Indeed, even though the male bourgeoisie is excluded from the use of physical violence against women in the sainete, the text makes a direct connection between the misogyny fostered by patriarchal bourgeois social beliefs and the legal system. He highlights that the legal system supports the violence suffered by working-class women at the hands of men of their own social class. As seen before, the lethargy and incompetence of the bourgeois members of the jury and the judge allow the "passionate" criminal to be absolved. Whereas there existed a regular practice among middle-class jury members to pay other low-class men to take their place in court, the judge himself shows a total lack of interest in his own job—as Gumersindo remarks the judge "empezó a roncar [c]omo una rosca" (100) during his trial. Hence, the text charges the liberal bourgeoisie with hypocrisy. On the one hand, the new liberal bourgeois regime promulgates a more "democratic" intervention of the average citizen—the wealthy upper and middle-class man—in the creation and implementation of the legal system. On the other hand, however, the very same social class that demands this new type of system, the ruling bourgeoisie, does not care for it once it is in practice. Here Arniches's text comes closer to the turn-of-the-century *regeneracionista* discourse, condemning the wrongs caused by an incompetent and apathetic liberal ruling class. These practices serve to

justify the backwardness and degradation of the Spanish lower classes. In this sense, the Author inserts his own judgement with the final intervention of a policeman who, while taking Paco to the police station, states: “La culpa de lo que hacéis la tié el Jurao y na más que el Jurao. Que fuera yo el que sentenciara estas cosas, y veríais... ¡Os echaba cinco años de presidio por granujas y diez por pasionales” (101).

In “Los pasionales,” then, the men belonging to the accommodated middle-class and the working-class share a common trait: laziness and lack of productivity. Certainly, one of Arniches’ prime items in his *regenerationista* agenda for Spain was the promotion of social productivity and the demonization of *la pereza* or idleness, as he manifests in his sainete “Los culpables”: “—... que durante diez años trabajase tóo el mundo y no hablase nadie. Y si al cabo de ese tiempo de aplicación y de silencio no habíamos progresao en un mil por mil, daba yo un vale con oción a que se me machacase la masa encefálica” (Arniches 66). A disciplined and hard-working man himself, Arniches condemns Spanish idleness in his portrayal of numerous idle characters from different social classes and spaces throughout his work. As Montero Padilla affirms when analyzing Arniches’ sainete “Los culpables,” for Arniches, “[l]a solución para el atraso del país se halla, tan sólo, en el trabajo: éste es la formula salvadora” (31).

Female labor, therefore, is essential to the construction of “Los pasionales,” reflecting the gender and class dynamics of Spanish society. If there is someone who works and is productive in “Los pasionales,” it is women. Arniches portrays hard-working young women whose earnings allow them to enjoy certain freedoms. Like other Madrilenian workers already studied such as the *cigarreras*, Nieves, as an ironer, has the opportunity to visit public spaces of leisure such as *verbenas* where she may encounter

men. Moreover, she lives in her own space without supervision and is free to live with her partner without a marriage contract. Arniches does not censure this practice which is indecent according to middle-class morality. Even though these ironers might not follow bourgeois morals, they are not sexualized or presented as seductive or loose women. As a matter of fact, they follow their own set of moral rules which regulate their faithful relationships with their men and give them a clear sense of solidarity.

Yet, one of the most interesting aspects of the portrayal of working women in this story is that, even though they might be the main sufferers of male violence and have no legal protection, they are not presented as mere victims. Whereas the story portrays women like Enriqueta who are subjected to male abuse and violence—in this case, by Gumersindo,—the story also presents other alternatives such as the character of Nieves. Or, in other words, while female labor can be a source of women's exploitation and abuse by men like Gumersindo, at the same time, it can also be a source of women's empowerment and independence in different ways. For instance, Nieves' economic independence contributes to strengthening her sense of worth and ensuing actions without fearing poverty. When she finds out that Paco is flirting with another girl at the ball, she does not hesitate to dance with el Petaca, a very handsome man. Thus, Nieves configures her body as a tool that, through its movements and proximity to a highly attractive man, works as a visual discourse of defiance and desire. Her economic independence allows her to position herself at the same level as Paco: if he thinks he has the right to flirt with other women, then she also has the same prerogative. The ball, in this manner, becomes a public space in which Nieves articulates a counterdiscourse of female empowerment. Unfortunately, Paco does not accept such a rebellious attitude on the part of his girlfriend

and when he sees her dancing with another man, he slaps her. Nonetheless, she does not feel intimidated and, insulted with such lack of respect, she decides to end her relationship with Paco. What is more, instead of remaining at home for such an unfortunate event—as middle-class female behavior and economic status would dictate and allow—Nieves continues with her daily activities of work and leisure in Madrid. In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau draws attention to how everyday practices of space can be seen as “a spoken language, that is, a linguistic system that distributes places insofar as it is articulated by an “enunciatory focalization,” [--the indication of the body within discourse--] by an act of practicing it” (116-30). Indeed, Nieves, by her trajectory in the city and in the places she occupies, inscribes her body into a counterdiscourse that destabilizes “founding narrations” (de Certeau 126) of male dominated space. Even after Paco starts a fight again with her dance partner at another ball and threatens her, Nieves goes to work the next day, which corresponds to the intradiegetic present time of the story.

Right before Paco meets Gumersindo, Nieves and her coworkers “trabajan, sofocadas, alegres y dicharacheras” (93) at the workshop. Meanwhile, Paco is walking back and forth across from the workshop shooting “miradas iracundas e inquisitivas” (93) at the open windows where the women are. Paco, with the visual manifestation of his intimidating bodily performance, is trying to threaten Nieves. Once the group of female workers notices him in the street, there is an “enojoso silencio entre las bulliciosas muchachas” (93). This silence among the workers, far from showing intimidation, is rather gesturing defiance on the part of the group of women who do not like him. In fact, “la más desenvuelta y garbosa, dice con sincera acritud, sacando una plancha del anafre y

arrimándosela a la mejilla:—Ya está ahí ese mosca.” (93). Both her verbal statement and physical posture support the group’s dislike for the young man. Even the workshop’s *maestra* (female master) joins in the group’s contempt against Paco, closing the window violently on him while showing anger and stating: “¿Pero qué se habrá creído ese *chulo* de baile?” (94). Then, the buzz among the female workers increases when one of them starts singing loud enough so that Paco listens to it:

Me he cansao de quererte,
búscate otra,
o aguarda a San Isidro
si quieres *tontas*. (94)

The message of the lyrics is clear: Paco does not have any chance of keeping his relationship with Nieves and, what is more, only a stupid girl would accept him as a boyfriend.

In anger, and mumbling words of hate against Nieves, the young *chulo* decides to wait for her when Gumersindo comes on the scene. On a narrative level, since the sainete starts *in medias res*—when Paco waits for Nieves across from the workshop—the presence of this second male character allows the narrative to explore Paco’s past relationship with Nieves by means of analepsis, which in turn becomes part of the metadiegetic level of the story or another story within the story. Interestingly, this narration belonging to the diegetic past of the story presents an individualized representation of Nieves and her relationship with Paco. Here she acts as a single character with her own desires—going to the ball and dancing—and reactions—breaking her relationship with Paco. However, this does not occur in the diegetic present to the

same extent as seen in Paco's narration. In all the examples shown above of the confrontation between Paco and "Nieves" at the workshop, Nieves does not appear as a single character at all. In contrast, her character becomes part of the collective voice which replies to Paco's unwanted presence. Indeed, this narrative transformation of Nieves' character responds to a turning point embodied by Paco's manifestation of violence. It is not Nieves on her own who is at the workshop, but "unas cuantas mocitas de garbo" (93). Likewise, it is not Nieves' "enojoso silencio" that takes place when noticing Paco's presence in the street, but the silence of "las bulliciosas muchachas" (93). Also, the girl who replies "Ya está ahí ese mosca," could be or not be Nieves, for she is only described as "una de ellas" (93) and the girl who sings the ironic and scornful lines simply belongs to "una mocita" (94).

The idea of Nieves' character merging with the collective character is even more striking at the end of the story, which could be considered the climax of this sainete. Once Paco is convinced by Gumersindo's "tactic" to control women, he decides that, when Nieves gets out of the workshop, he will order her to continue their relationship and if she rejects the proposal, he will mark her face forever. However, Nieves does not come out alone from the workshop since she is surrounded by her workmates. Gumersindo, although suspecting that the girls have planned something, advises Paco to go on with the plan. While Gumersindo "[v]ase calle abajo, huyendo de la quema" (100), Paco, "Un poco pálido" (100), approaches Nieves and the group and asks her to come away from the others to talk to him. Since the girl rejects his request, Paco warns her that he is so mad that he cannot be responsible for his own actions ("Nieves, que estoy ciego"). Nieves answers scoffing at him ("Cómprate un perro"), which provokes her coworkers' laughter.

The *chulo*, enraged, grabs Nieves by the arm and takes out a pocketknife. But before he can open it, the girls spring into action: “aquel enjambre de mocitas bravías cae sobre él y le desarman, le tiran al suelo y, con llaves, bolsos de mano y puños cerrados, le dan una paliza de órdago a la grande, y le dejan en tierra sangrando por boca y narices” (101). Therefore, it is not only Nieves, but the group of women as a whole who teaches Paco a lesson.

The women understand that while at the work place, an interior space defined by physical and social barriers, Nieves is safe. Nonetheless, although the urban public street might be a site of liberation for the anonymous working-class woman without the surveillance of relatives or neighbors, it can also be a site of danger (Walkowitz 11). Now that Paco stalks Nieves with pernicious intentions, her everyday outings in the Madrilénian streets become unsafe. Thanks to the bonding and sense of community built among the women at the workshop, Nieves is able to both escape from Paco’s aggression and, what is more, give him a dose of his own medicine. In this respect, the workshop is more than a simple space where female labor occurs. As presented in “Los Pasionales,” this female worksite is also the realm of female community building which contests prevalent patriarchal schemes of domination and violence. At the workshop, understood then as a public counterspace, working women (re)create their identities and reinvent linguistic and body discourses that subvert male domination. In this fashion, since women are legally unprotected against male violence, they will have to unite and fight back if necessary with the same tool: physical violence.

If we consider, however, that Arniches published these *sainetes* for the readers of the magazine “Blanco y Negro,” a publication predominantly geared towards the middle

class, then, it is clear that Arniches was not only trying to teach “good manners” to the working class, but he also desired to instill a sense of responsibility into the bourgeoisie. As described earlier, it is no wonder then that Arniches ends the story with a public condemnation of the apathetic higher bourgeoisie through the words of a policeman. Although powerless because his position does not allow him to legally sentence people the policeman manifests a “real” sense of justice in his denunciation of the bourgeoisie’s incompetence to punish “passionate” criminals such as Paco or Gumersindo.

This tragicomic *sainete* possesses the literary peculiarities of the *género chico*: short extension, *tipo* characters like Paco el Metralla or Gumersindo, popular language and *castizo* spaces such as the Madrilenian street, the verbena (“open-air dance”) and the female workshop, etc. However, such traditional costumbrista traits, common to the end-of-the-century *sainete*, are imbricated with other new thematic and aesthetic elements. In this respect, the fact that this *sainete* was primarily written for publication in a magazine and not for its immediate representation indicates Arniches’ modern conceptualization of theater (Salaün, “Carlos Arniches” 24). According to Salaün, “el teatro de Arniches abre perspectivas más originales, a partir de las fórmulas tradicionales, pero pervirtiéndolas o subvirtiéndolas, dando lugar así a una nueva dramaturgia, aunque sea sin proponérselo” (“Carlos Arniches” 26). Although Salaün is mostly referring here to Arniches’ longer plays written after 1915, I believe that “Los Pasionales” also manifests Arniches’ renovation of traditional theatrical formulas to articulate his ideological agenda. The introduction of the main character, Paco el Metralla, is telling in this respect. In “Los pasionales,” although the opening scene takes place in the streets of a “Madrid castizo y

jaranero” (93), the entrance of Paco el Metralla in the scene is far from idyllic. He is the anti-prototype of the *castizo chulo madrileño*. Furthermore, his attitude towards women, his ridiculous masculine performance, and his final situation in the *sainete* render him as un *chulo tragicómico* that borders on the pathetic. The character of Paco el Metralla is one of those characters “[que] siguen funcionando como estereotipos o arquetipos, pero su finalidad y su relación con la realidad ha cambiado; no se trata ya de provocar la risa intrascendente y digestiva del sainete costumbrista, sino de abrir perspectivas, de provocar una toma de conciencia” (23). Certainly, in “Los pasionales,” Arniches aims to make his readers aware of a pressing issue: the inefficacy and corruption of the bourgeois legal system and its pernicious effect on the lives of working women.

The modernity of Arniches’ *sainete* is not limited to its theme. In this regards, it is important to focus on the literary form in which Arniches expresses his critique of Gurmensido’s *crimen pasional* (crime of passion), a form which brings to the fore the avant-garde’s influence on his narrative techniques. Salaün highlights Arniches’ “‘poetización’ del lenguaje, por el humor no realista [que] ofrece una tentativa de subversión de los mecanismos convencionales, desde la lengua misma” in his longer plays written after 1915 (“Carlos Arniches” 32-3). In “Los pasionales” this innovation can be seen for instance in the *esperpento*-like scene at the court: a dozing judge, a grotesque lower-class jury and Gumersindo’s pathetic self-defense and final release. When representing Gumersindo’s plea of innocence, Arniches makes use of what Salaün has termed “dinamismo asociativo,” i.e., the association of ideas and words that in some occasions “adquieren visos surrealistas” (“Carlos Arniches” 30). Thus, Gumersindo states that, when he committed his crime against Enriqueta, “no sabía si estaba jugando a la

brisca o dando puñalás” (99). The humor that results from this association of ideas—playing cards and stabbing people amount to the same action according to the chulo—is quite different from the one seen in traditional *género chico* and more similar to the black humor employed by avant-garde authors. Indeed, the manipulation of language that Arniches carries out produces a sense of humor that crudely underscores the seriousness of the problem.

The narrative structure that Arniches applies in this sainete is also different from the traditional structural framework of *género chico* mentioned before, “Los Pasionales” was written for publication in a magazine and not for its immediate staging. Taking into account that the primary consumer of this sainete is the reader and not the audience, Arniches was able to implement and innovate with narrative and structure techniques more attuned to the requirements of a reader’s imagination. Therefore, the dialogue between Paco and Gumersindo takes the largest part of the *sainete*, which substantially decreases the dynamism of the action and the number of character interventions on stage that traditional sainete representations showcased. Paco and Gumersindo’s oral recollection of past experiences lacks visual immediacy and brio for the spectator who needs to refer to her/his imagination in order to reconstruct the characters’ story. In contrast, for the reader, who recreates the story in her/his imagination, the *chulos’* metadiegetic narratives allows her/him to explore the psychology of both characters. Thus, by using analepis, Arniches allows Paco to recount his story with Nieves from his own perspective, to unravel his own gender bias and prejudices. What is more, the reader cannot identify with any of these pathetic *chulos* because their recollections and their actions in the narrative uncover their imperfections and immoral behavior.

The location of working women as the agents of the climax of “Los Pasionales” shows the innovative formal and thematic traits of the text as well. As seen above, the flow of the structure of the narration culminates in a shocking scene in which female bonding triumphs over male misogyny with the ironers knocking down Paco. The narrative then places its focus on the benefits achieved by these women thanks to their previous association and cooperation in the workspace. Thus, the space at the workshop is constructed as the spatial “facilitator” of female bonding which eventually annuls male prowess.

The portrayal of these working women in the final scene is also innovative in relation to the way in which working women were often depicted in *Género Chico*. When describing the ironers beating up Paco (“enjambre de mocitas bravías”), Arniches juxtaposes the adjective “bravías” to the noun “mocitas” creating a very particular image of these working women. The text turns them into fierce little young girls, a patronizing representation which resorts to the women’s infantilization. In some of the representations of the *cigarreras* who took part in end-of-the-century revolts, the working woman who takes up culturally assumed “male behaviors” such as public demonstrating or/and physical violence is either perceived as uncontrollable and hysterical or as a sweet little mad girl. These representations of the *cigarreras* in the conservative press define the uncontrollable working woman as “a destructive wom[a]n who reverted to ineffective childishness once their fury had subsided” (O’Connor “Representation” 156). In this *sainete*, however there is a significant transformation in such representation. In Arniches’ description of the female ironers, the diminutive “-itas” in “*mocitas*” seems to diminish

the seriousness of the act that these girls are about to perform. Furthermore, Arniches uses the diminutive when the girl's aggression against Paco is taking place and not after.

Nonetheless, it is necessary to continue reading the same paragraph to completely understand the oxymoronic relationship between the girls and their action. In fact, these little young girls' feat goes beyond what could be expected from such "sweet" girls for they reach such a level of violence against Paco that he gets "una paliza de órdago a la grande" (101), i.e., such a bad beating that he ends up with a bleeding nose and mouth and lying on the ground. While Arniches has recourse to a stereotyped view of working-class women as prone to violence, it is true that this view does not correspond to the female violence that originates spontaneously and without control according to bourgeois cultural assumptions regarding working-class female gender. On the contrary, the girls' attack on Paco has been planned and orchestrated previously as Gumersindo suspected—"se han maliciao algo" (100)—turning the assumed idea of working-class woman as impulsive and violent into a mere cultural and classist construction. In this way, Arniches confers on his working women characters a trait that was often willingly ignored by predominant cultural constructions of female workers during this time: their capacity to organize themselves and be effective as O'Connor has pointed out in a different context ("Representation" 160). By putting into contrast the girls' infantile description and their violent act, Arniches achieves a dramatic effect in the story closer to the grotesque of the tragicomedy than to the hilarious tone of the traditional *sainete* of the *género chico*. Thus, the narrative demonstrates how the most apparently helpless working-class woman can defeat male violence through her bonding and collaboration with other women.

In all, Arniches was one of the few authors who drew attention to a pressing social issue—violence against women—that was not part of the politicians’ agenda of his time and which was greatly ignored or accepted by Spanish society at large. Perhaps, it is now, from a modern critical perspective in which the condemnation of domestic violence appears nearly every day in Spanish media, that we can fully appreciate Arniches’ denunciation.

CHAPTER 2

RECONFIGURING THE HOME: WOMEN'S LABOR IN REALISM AND NATURALISM

The frontier of a virtuous woman begins and ends at her doorstep.

Aldaraca, *El Ángel del Hogar*

Si tuviéramos oficios y carreras las mujeres, como los tienen esos bergantes de hombres, anda con Dios. Pero, fíjese, sólo tres carreras pueden seguir las que visten faldas: o casarse, que carrera es, o el teatro..., vamos, ser cómica, que es buen modo de vivir, o... no quiero nombrar lo otro.

The maid Saturna in Galdós' *Tristana*

The foundation of the modern state in Western countries during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries came along with the establishment of the doctrine of separate gender spheres. In the new bourgeois imaginary, men were configured as the main source of income with free access to the public space, and the proper and decent woman, the “angel of the hearth and home,” was constrained to the domestic space. In the dominant bourgeois conceptualization of decent femininity, women became semiotic referents that symbolized their male relatives’ social status and economic power. Social dignity was measured on the grounds of the domestic display of the bourgeois male’s property: the house, the furniture, the china, the clothes, and the wife. The visual exhibition of idleness by middle-class women, as Anne McClintock claims, was inscribed as a necessary trait in the social configuration of the bourgeoisie (*Imperial Leather* 160). It does not come as a surprise that “the Industrial Revolution helped create a demand for domestic servants by nurturing the notion of the middle-class woman who would protect her own feminine purity from manual labor and yet still provide a refuge for her hardworking husband” (Enloe 178).

From a bourgeois point of view, female work—both in Spain as in other European countries—was considered a degrading and indecent practice for women since it destroyed their femininity and domesticity and caused the loss of men’s economic prowess and masculinity, and consequently, their loss of control over women. Indeed, “[t]he very idea that a woman might wish to live by or for herself was anathema to the bourgeois ideologues” (Jagoe 25). This is so because, as Aldaraca explains, work performed by a bourgeois woman “is a manifestation of the husband’s lack of economic power and, consequently, an overt sign of downward class mobility” (63). For the bourgeois imaginary the ideal place for a proper middle-class woman was at home taking care of her children and husband. Therefore, the fact that the bourgeois dwelling became the main spatial referent for women’s decency and domesticity underlines the fact that “[h]ouses are shaped not just by materials and tools, but by ideas, values, and norms” (Spain 111), which, as I will analyze in this chapter, can also be transgressed and contested.

However, while wealthy bourgeois women could afford to perform as angels of the hearth and house, working-class and lower middle-class women faced a very different reality. On many occasions, the single modest income brought home by the man of the house was barely or not enough to meet the most basic family needs. As this was the case of most working-class households, it was not uncommon for wives and daughters to contribute to the family economy with their own work at home, in the factory, as maids, street vendors, and so on. In the bourgeois imaginary the access to public spaces of labor by working-class women did not imply an ideological split with nineteenth-century bourgeois structures of feelings. These women, as seen in the previous chapter, were

perceived as sexually uncontrollable and “public,” a categorization used, in turn, to define what middle-class women were “not”: undomesticated, subject to their bodies and desires, violent and loud. In differentiation, middle-class female workers faced a unique panorama when confronted with the tight strictures of their own bourgeois imaginary.

The petty or impoverished bourgeoisie, in its attempt to differentiate itself from the vulgarity of the working classes, made every possible effort to follow the customs and attitudes of the higher classes. As Aldaraca remarks, “[t]he bourgeois angel was counterpoised not only to the aristocrat but to women of lower social rank, for her exclusion from all productive labor was a way of signifying her family’s rise out of the working class, most of whose women were employed in agriculture, industry, or service” (*Ángel del hogar* 21). But the desire not to be like the working class did not come without problem. As Rita Felski comments, the lower middle class “is the ultimate example of psychic self-regulation, of a class that has built the bars of its prison” (“Nothing to Declare” 36). Shame or fear of being placed in a social class culturally coded as the Other, regulated and constrained middle-class behavior. As mentioned before, clothing, furniture, and the number of servants were symbolic referents that expressed the social status of the family. Many lower bourgeois families had to sacrifice certain expenses of their everyday lives, such as food or electricity consumption, in order to afford a conveniently located apartment in the city or to pay for expensive clothes. The petty and middle bourgeoisie’s attitude to “aparentar” or to keep up appearances in spite of obvious economic difficulties became more dramatic when the males of the family were absent due to unexpected circumstances such as death or illness. Then, bourgeois women found themselves in a society which had not prepared them either psychologically or

professionally to exist independently from male economic and social protection: what could they do without any professional training and with the heavy chains of domestic femininity, decency and shame imposed upon them?

Many of these women opted to work secretly at home, sewing or doing embroidery. Working in the domestic space allowed them to remain in the “safest” place for women according to the dominant bourgeois discourse. On the other, working at home prevented others from seeing these women lingering on the streets where sexual “dangers” abounded or entering immoral spaces such as factories or workshops where they could come in touch with the opposite sex. Often impoverished middle-class women became “*obreras vergonzantes*” (Scanlon 85, Capel Martínez, *Trabajo* 170) or ashamed female workers who turned to intermediaries. These mediators or *arañas* provided seamstresses and other females working at home with delivery service bringing them the material needed to perform their work and selling the final product to the store. In exchange for getting a considerable amount of the female worker’s already meager profits, the *arañas* would spare female workers visiting the store and being seen (Scanlon 85). In this manner, middle-class women secured their decency and their “apparent” good economic status, keeping their labor activity in the private sphere away from public opinion. Therefore, shame and pride justified these women’s “wise” decision to work for wages in the private realm performing jobs which, for their “nature,” were considered as feminine such as embroidery and sewing. Conservatives thought of the domestic setting and this type of job as the best solution for women’s unavoidable access to production as workers so that “con la cabeza inclinada sobre su costura, [una mujer] podía mecer la cuna con un pie y mantener un ojo fijo en el puchero” (Scanlon 85).

These “perfect” jobs were in reality quite horrendous. Women working at home usually suffered the worst labor conditions. Home-bound female work constituted “uno de los sectores con peores condiciones laborales” (Nash 53). To start with, their work lacked proper legislation for decades, even after other jobs such as factory work had been regulated. Not until the year 1926 was female work in the domestic realm legislated (Cabrera Pérez 76). Additionally, isolation at home did not contribute to build a community of female workers, which would have provided a possible venue to promote unionization and to fight for the creation and enforcement of laws to protect their labor (Nash 53), as it had been the case with tobacco factory workers. On top of that, many women who worked at home were forced to do so for more than fifteen hours per day (Nash, 53, Scanlon 84) in order to hopefully earn enough money to defray their daily basic expenses. Although away from the pollution of factory environments, at-home work also took a physical toll on these women. Countless hours of sitting down sewing in poorly lit places provoked back and neck cramps and deformations, deficient blood circulation and impaired eyesight (Carreras qtd. in Nash 354). According to the data collected and published by the Dirección general de Sanidad, “durante el lustro de 1900 y 1905 . . . el número de obreras tísicas excede, en Barcelona, dos mil quinientas, de las que mil seiscientas son costureras” (Francos Rodríguez qtd. in Nash 362). Such figures only corroborate the inhuman circumstances in which these women worked.

In addition to the poor working conditions suffered by at-home workers, Mary Nash points out that the competition among these workers resulted in low salaries (53). Nevertheless, one of the main motives for the scant remuneration for female wage work at home was the competition they faced by religious and charity institutions which

sheltered “mujeres abandonadas Las hacen trabajar de la mañana a la noche Lavan, planchan, bordan, cosen... todo. A precios inverosímiles, que no consienten competencia” (Carmen de Burgos Mujer Moderna 106). But the truth is that the lack of legal regulation and the predominant view of the home as a place unrelated to market production and therefore open to exploitation, contributed to these women’s dreadful jobs.

As a result of the predominant spatial configuration of gender in society, fictional representations of nineteenth century femininity emphasize the idea of the middle-class woman in an enclosed space, suffocated by her domestic duties and unable to move away from her domestic center, both literally and symbolically: *La Regenta* (1884-5), *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928), *La de Bringas* (1884), *Madame Bovary* (1857) or *Memorias de un solterón* (1896) are only some examples of women’s discontent with their domestic lives. Even most critical readings also insist on the idea that women at this time were constrained in the home, underlining the fact that “[t]he masculine production of labor was . . . removed spatially from the feminine reproduction of labor” (Spain 103). However, Doreen Massey states that dominant constructions of space are always open for contestation (5). Furthermore, Massey notes that “the identity of that place called home derived precisely from the fact that it had always in one way or another been open; constructed out of movement, communication, asocial relations which always stretched beyond it” (171). In this sense, my interpretation of the novel Tormento (1884) by Benito Pérez Galdós and two short stories “Casi artista” (1908) and “El mundo” (1908) by Emilia Pardo Bazán offers a different perspective. Accordingly, I emphasize the fact that, unlike other literary works of the time, these narratives dismantle the nineteenth-

century conception of the home as “the locus of love, emotion and empathy [far away] from the . . . world of capitalism” (McDowell 75) through the representation of female workers who performed their jobs within the domestic space. By configuring the home as a site of commodity production, the bourgeois or working-class female worker in these texts renegotiates and transgresses the metaphysical turn-of-the-century middle-class idea of the home as the place “to recognize life’s slow pace and the pleasures of sedentary meditation” (Kant qtd. in Perrot 342).

2.1. “Home, Sweet Home”?: Domestic Workers in Pérez Galdós’ *Tormento* (1884)

¿Sabe la señorita cómo llama a las que sacan los pies del plato? Pues las llaman, por buen nombre, *libres*. . . . De consiguiente, si ha de haber un poco de reputación, es preciso que haya dos pocos de esclavitud.

The maid Saturna, *Tristana*

A particularly obvious example which contested the false dichotomy between femininity/private space, masculinity/public space is the case of maids, one of the very few options for working-class and rural women who needed to make a living in a country that, by the end of the nineteenth century, was definitely poor. Maids not only had to move in public spaces such as the street or the store to perform their jobs, but also blurred the distinction between domestic space and paid labor, for most of their work happened in the privacy of middle or upper-class homes. Among other reasons, the blurring of distinctions performed by maids draw middle-class authors’ attention. Maids became common referents in fictional creations of Spanish literature and culture in the hands of these authors. However, since “the representation of gender is its construction” (5) as Teresa de Lauretis states, fictional representations of maids were deeply conditioned by the class and gender prejudices of the creator and the social class of the intended readers.

Following Massey's idea that any attempt to fix the meaning of particular places can always be contested (5), I will analyze how the literary representation of the maid and the spaces that she occupies within the narrative reveals middle-class anxieties about those women who did not comply with the prototype of the "angel of the hearth and home" and who therefore destabilized the dominant bourgeois configuration of female domestic space. Therefore, since I consider places not so much as bounded areas but as open, porous networks of social relations as Massey argues (179), I will pay particular attention to how class and gender power relations configure the spaces that characters who are domestic servants inhabit. In particular, I will study the novel *Tormento* (1884), written by Spain's foremost realist writer, Benito Pérez Galdós.

Nancy Armstrong, in her book *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, contends that the English realist novel encouraged readers to identify with the private sphere of the home. Similarly, the nineteenth-century Spanish realist novel, in its attempt to portray Spanish society in all its complexity, also paid special attention to private life. Galdós himself believed that the chief aspiration of contemporary literature should be "conocer el origen y el remedio de ciertos males que turban las familias" ("Observaciones" 323). Despite its focus on domestic life, the realist novel often placed those who had to endure the material burdens of domestic life in a marginal position; a practice that some critics have also reproduced in their analysis. Theory of space critic Linda McDowell explains that male theorists such as Bachelard and Heidegger have often seen the house as "a pre-industrial idyll [denying] the labor that goes into turning a house into a home" (72). As seen before, *Tormento* presents an alternative view and I emphasize the fact that, unlike other literary works of the time, Galdós' novel contests the

nineteenth-century conception of the home as a place isolated from the vicissitudes of paid labor through his representation of domestic servants.

Tormento's main protagonist is Amparo, an impoverished petit bourgeois young woman who desires to be the perfect "angel of the hearth and home." Nonetheless, her desire is frustrated by "the fear of downward class mobility" (Aldaraca, *Ángel del hogar* 148) which is a threat if society discovers her past love affair with the priest Pedro Polo. When her father dies, Amparo is forced to "[hacer] ese voto de heroísmo que se llama *vivir de su trabajo*" (21) first as seamstress working at home and then as an unstated servant at her benefactors: the Bringas family. Whereas she prefers to remain "poor, but still 'respectable'" as Bridget Aldaraca explains, Refugio, Amparo's sister, "de carácter algo bravío y [amante de] la independencia" (*Tormento* 23), decides to leave the domestic realm and make a living performing indecorous jobs. Geoffrey Ribbans has rightly noted that "Refugio harbours no doubts about the effects of poverty and the derisory rewards of honest work" (505). Certainly, Amparo's sister has tried to follow the only "decent" options available to impoverished single middle-class women as a seamstress. Yet, the scarce income and terrible conditions of such work shake her initial desire to maintain her social status as an enclosed virtuous female. As time goes by, Refugio refuses to overwork herself for meager wages and instead chooses to become a "public woman" working as a model for a painter and later on, as implied by the narrator, by having different male benefactors.

Critic Elena Delgado has rightly argued that in the nineteenth-century social imaginary, women's excessive circulation in the public sphere was associated with lack of sexual morality (*Imagen elusiva* 113). However, Refugio's portrayal questions the

validity of the middle-class correlation between decorum and femininity, reducing the relation to a simple economic matter:

¿Por qué es mala una mujer? Por la pobreza... Tú has dicho: “Si trabajas...”. ¿Pues no he trabajado bastante? ¿Qué son mis dedos? Se han vuelto de palo de tanto coser. ¿Y qué he ganado? Miseria y más miseria... Asegúrame la comida, la ropa, y nada tendrás que decir de mí (62).

On the other hand, in spite of her past moral indiscretion and current torment, Amparo decides to lead a life of sacrifice, hard labor and moral edification, all qualities that are presented in the text as “intrinsic” to her. That is to say, in contrast to other Galdosian characters, Amparo does not pretend to be serious, austere or hard working in order to preserve her reputation. She is, by nature, inclined to behave in a way that would make her the ideal female. Indeed, the reader only knows about the true nature of her transgression at the very end of the text, and by then he/she might be truly shocked to learn what it was, so strong a portrait of female virtue has the author painted of her until that point. To reinforce the perception of Amparo as an angel of the hearth and home, the narrator often highlights her personal traits as such: “callada, sufrida, imagen viva de la paciencia, . . .; trabajadora, dispuesta a todo, económica de palabras” (24). However, the passive personality the angel of the hearth and home is supposed to possess is constantly mocked by the narrator’s ironic comments: “Le entró tal estupidez . . .” (55), “aquel idiotismo” (191), “como los tontos”, “rayaba en imbecilidad”, “autómata” (170). He even calls her “Amparito” (193) in several occasions. Along these lines, it is important to remember that as the reader discovers in *Tormento’s* sequel, *La de Bringas* (1884), the narrator is in fact a middle-class character of “dubious ethical integrity” as both Tsuchiya

(“Construction of the Female Body” 46) and Delgado (“Más estragos” 35) have observed. By describing Amparo in such manner, the narrator shows a patronizing attitude towards the girl underscoring his gender prejudices. At the same time, his words about Amparo can also be interpreted as criticism against the figure of the “angel of the hearth and home” for it only produces idiotic women without free will.

To preserve her status as a respectable middle-class woman, Amparo continues working as an overexploited maid under Rosalía de Bringas’ command. But in order to keep up with female bourgeois decorum which disapproved of female paid labor, “Amparo must forfeit any right to demand a wage for her services” (Aldaraca, “*Tormento*” 145). Thus, she depends on the Bringas family’s charity. Class consciousness and insecurity also affects Rosalía de Bringas, the girl’s mistress and protector, who sharing “la inveterada *pereza* del espíritu, la *ociosidad* de muchas generaciones y la falta de educación intelectual y moral” (21-2 emphasis added) of the Spanish bourgeoisie, “no podía perdonar a las hijas de Emperador [Amparo y Refugio] que fuesen ramas de arbusto tan humilde como el conserje de un establecimiento de enseñanza” (22). Indeed, the power relations that Rosalía establishes with Amparo emphasize Joelle Bahloul’s idea that the “[d]omestic space is the material representation of the social order” (qtd. in McDowell 72). The mistress, herself cut-off from agency and power as a petit bourgeois woman in a patriarchal society as both Delgado and Tsuchiya have remarked (“El derecho de revisión” 428-9; “Construction of the Female Body” 16), conceives Amparo’s work as one of the few sites where she can exert control, reproducing in that manner the class dynamics of Spanish society. Thus, Rosalía treats Amparo with condescending scorn and makes her do “recados penosos, algunos impropios de una señorita” (23).

Amparo's situation within the Bringas' family changes once they learn that she is engaged to Agustín, one of the richest men in Madrid and Rosalía's husband's cousin. Rosalía, understanding the economic benefits she can obtain from her relationship with Amparo, stops treating her like a servant: "Aquella vez, Rosalía no le hizo ya ningún encargo de tubos, ovillos de algodón, ni botones o varas de cinta, y la despidió, lo mismo que Bringas, con melosas palabrejas" (117). Amparo's luck does not last for long when her secret is made public through gossip. Akiko Tsuchiya has analyzed the power of gossip as a mechanism of social surveillance and control in nineteenth-century novels ("Talk, Small and Not So Small" 392). Particularly, Tsuchiya notes that "in Galdós' novels, el qué dirán motivates the actions of many of the characters whose standing in society is marginal or uncertain" ("Talk, Small and Not So Small" 392). Rosalía understands that in a society where everything is in circulation, as Joe Labanyi states, the possession of certain information is a valuable asset to obtain particular benefits. When she learns that Amparo is not a "decent" woman, and therefore that she is out of circulation as a respectable middle-class woman in Madrid's society, Rosalía has the power to relocate the girl into the domestic realm as a servant making use of a discourse of power in which labor stands for subordination: "Mira, haz el favor de ir a la cocina y lavarme prontito estos dos pañuelos" (161). In addition, since Amparo's good status in society "se basa no en su fuerza de trabajo sino en . . . el mantenimiento de la virginidad" as Aldaraca reminds us ("*Tormento*" 221), and now society is aware of her fault, Rosalía is forced to dismiss her so that she herself does not lose face with her society friends. In this sense, both Amparo and Rosalía share the constant fear of being displaced to a lower class by their own society and aim to comply with bourgeois norms, which brings to the

fore the “relationship between social formations and structures of feeling” in nineteenth-century Spain in which “shame is central to the cultural fabric” (Fox 14).

Nonetheless, against the moral principles of nineteenth-century Spanish society, *Tormento* ends in a surprising manner: after Agustín learns about Amparo’s secret, he accepts the girl as his lover and intends to live with her “como casados” in Paris (196). She then will obtain the “amparo”, the shelter or place of protection that she has longed for. Ironically, despite Amparo’s genuine desire to become the “angel of the hearth and home” and inhabit “la seguridad física del interior doméstico” (Aldaraca, “*Tormento*” 219), Spanish society does not accept her in such a role for she has broken the established moral codes. Thus, her destiny, according to Spanish society’s moral principles, as Raquel Macciuci has stated, “debería . . . traducirse en más miseria y marginación social, o en prostitución, o en convento” (214) or, I would add, in the protagonist’s death. The ending of the novel, as a criticism of a stagnant Madrilenian middle-class society, does offer her an alternative social position in France, where presumably the norms that regulated feminine behavior were less strict.

Amparo is not the only woman who suffers from Rosalía’s scorn and domination in the novel. Prudencia is an evolution of the popular Golden Age cervantine Maritornes, an “ordinaria, fea y hombruna” (“maritornes”) maid whose major role in the literary text is to instill humor in the dialogues. As a nineteenth-century Maritornes, Prudencia brings forth the narrator’s classist and sexist ideology in Galdós’ novel. She is a flat character whose description by the narrator is superficial, schematic and ironic. Indeed, the narrator perceives her as a “mujer seca y musculosa [que anda] con duro pisar de corcel no domado” (94). On a different occasion, she is described as “tarasca” (95), which

colloquially refers to a “Mujer temible o denigrada por su agresividad, fealdad, desaseo o excesiva desvergüenza” (“tarasca”). Her ugliness and unfeminine attributes locate the maid in a peripheral, humorous and ridiculous position in the narrative. However, such negative attributes also “ponen de relieve . . . todo lo que transgrede la definición cultural de feminidad normativa” as Tsuchiya manifests (“Tarascas” 17). Thus, whereas the characterization of Prudencia by the hostile narrator uncovers his prejudices against this working class woman who does not comply with society’s idea of female beauty, it also brings to light “[el] cuestionamiento de las categorías y límites genéricos” (Tsuchiya, “Tarascas” 17). Additionally, behind the narrator’s classist stereotyping, the narrative also reveals a more realistic depiction of Prudencia’s character: every time the reader finds the maid in the novel, she is portrayed working without pause. Prudencia embodies the *criada para todo* (maid of all work) a servant who, as Spanish historian Rosa María Capel Martínez describes, has to take care of the children, “limpiar la casa, preparar la comida, hacer la compra, fregar, lavar la ropa, atender la puerta, . . . preparar el baño a la señora, realizar recados, [etc.] Los domingos . . . a lo sumo . . . se les concede media hora para ir a misa” (181). The fact that Prudencia lives at her employers’ house is also significant of the blurry distinction between labor and home. The lack of spatial separation between work and domestic space erases time boundaries which would demarcate her working day schedule. Since she is physically present most of the day, she is also made to work continuously.

The location of her bedroom at the Bringas’ is symbolic of Prudencia’s marginal position and exploitation within the family’s home. As Rosalía describes it to one of her friends, the maid’s bedroom is: “Ocurito, sí; pero ella, ¿para qué quiere luces?” (19).

Rosalía's words brings to light not only the configuration of middle-class domestic spaces in late nineteenth-century-urban Spain where the domestic service occupied the worst rooms of the house, but also the ideology and class discourses in which such spaces were conceived. As Capel mentions, multiple details such as uniforms, location of bedrooms, an expected submissive behavior, were a constant reminder for domestic servants of their inferior social status (*Trabajo* 182). Similar to Amparo's case, Rosalía's paternalistic and domineering attitude toward Prudencia in the domestic realm reflects turn-of-the-century class dynamics of Spanish society which continuously relocated domestics within their working-class status. More interestingly, Rosalía's power relations with both Amparo and Prudencia also emphasize power dynamics in which the domination of women is performed by other women, instead of by men.

If Prudencia is an example of class and labor exploitation in the novel, the case of Celedonia is quite different. Although hired by the priest Pedro Polo as his housekeeper, Celedonia breaks away with the ideal of domesticity that her job represents. To start with, the housekeeper is presented by the narrator as an old and kind widow "que no sabía gobernar ni su casa ni la ajena" (75) but who had worked for a salary for the most part of her life. Her lack of interest in housework is one of the reasons why Polo's house is in such a deplorable state. Domestic space itself has no appeal for her either and, because of her state as a widow and as a working-class woman, she is free to "callejear y hacer tertulia en casa de las vecinas" (75). Indeed, as Colette Rabaté indicates, in spite of their precarious economic situation, widows were thought to enjoy more freedoms than single or married women as Spanish cultural productions of the time demonstrate (156-7).

In addition to freeing herself from the constraints of domestic space, Celedonia holds certain “masculine” traits that go beyond traditional femininity. According to the narrative voice, Celedonia is in fact “una autoridad de peso en asuntos religiosos Sabía de liturgia más que muchos curas, y el almanaque eclesiástico lo tenía en la punta de la uña” (75). But in contrast to Doña Marcelina and other Galdosian female characters, whom Catherine Jagoe defines as “perverse, excessively pious *mojigata[s]*” (85), Celedonia seems to profess a different type of inclination toward religious matters. While a believer, the housekeeper is not shown as a pious woman who “attends” mass and prays, but as a woman who actively participates in the understanding of religious dogma and could perform a priest’s job. Instead of being the passive receiver of the teachings of the Catholic Church, she is more interested in the technical and theological aspects of priesthood, a role limited to males. For the hostile narrative voice, Celedonia’s knowledge and approach to religious matters seems to be negative since “con tanta ciencia, no sabía hacer una taza de café, ni cuidar un enfermo, ni aderezar los guisos más comunes” (74). Nevertheless, in comparison to Prudencia or Amparo, she is the only character who is truly independent and happy because, as a widow, her ability to move in the social space is much greater than that of a single woman.

What is more, Celedonia has reconfigured Polo’s house to her own benefit, by simultaneously reconfiguring it as her domestic and workspace and by creating a particular relationship with her employer where his authority is constantly either ignored or contested. For example, whereas Amparo is busy cleaning and cooking at Polo’s house, Celedonia keeps on talking about religious issues even though “Don Pedro la mandó varias veces a la cocina, sin ser obedecido” (77).

But between employer and employee there is also an affective relationship which does away with class divisions and with the bourgeois conception of the family as a sexual or biological union. In a time when the middle-class establishes the home as the ideal space where the family finds its refuge and protection from outside dangers, Don Pedro and Celedonia conceptualize the space of the home and their own relationship on the foundation of an affective exchange. There is no biological bond or sexual attraction between them; it is simply a tacit contract in which they support each other in times of need. Thus, when Don Pedro falls into a depression, Celedonia, described as “bondadosa y sin malicia” (74), worries about him and tries to cheer him up: “Pero ¿no ve que se va a consumir en ese sillón? . . . ¿No vale más que se vaya a un café? . . . Lo primero es vivir. Márchese de jaleo y diviértase, que para lo del alma tiempo habrá” (85). In the same way, when Celedonia is in bed suffering from rheumatism, Polo takes care of her in a surprising caring way:

¡Pobre mujer!—dijo Polo—. No he querido mandarla al hospital. ¿Quién ha de cuidar de ella si yo no la cuido? . . . No se puede mover. He tenido que darle una vuelta en la cama. Yo le doy las medicinas... Se resite a tomar cosa alguna, como yo no se las dé. También pongo las vendas en las rodillas, y unturas y cataplasmas... Anoche no he pegado los ojos. Ni un momento dejó de gritar y llamarme” (139).

The role of other secondary maid characters is so vital that the plot would not develop in the same way or would not develop at all. There are numerous instances in the novel in which working-class female workers are determinant in the dissemination of information: their prolific ability to talk and spread information helps make things happen for the

bourgeoisie. It also helps the narrator gather more data and present it to the reader as truth. On several occasions, information is presented through the servants' comments as heard by the narrator. Thus, reconstructing the dispute between Pedro Polo and some nuns, the narrative voice mentions: "Cuenta la mandadera, mujer de *gran locuacidad*, digna de ser llevada a un Parlamento, que un día tuvieron las señoras y don Pedro un 'coramvobis' en el locutorio, del cual resultó . . . que el capellán mandó a las monjas al...—al infierno debió de ser" (72 emphasis added). In the same fashion, the narrator resorts to another servant's testimony to explain how after Marcelina discovered Amparo's love letter addressed to Pedro Polo, the *mojigata* got into a quarrel with him: "*Cuenta* la criada que por entonces tuvieron, segoviana, astuta y *chismosa*, que el hallazgo de no sé qué papeles hizo descubrir a doña Marcelina debilidades graves de su hermano, y que, enzarzados los dos en agria disputa, sobrevino la ruptura" (73 emphasis added). Interestingly, the narrator emphasizes these women's ability to circulate information in an ironic way: "gran locuacidad" "digna de ser llevada a un parlamento" "chismosa". There is also one scene in which Agustín and Amparo find themselves talking in the darkness at the de Bringas' home. Although the lovers feel more comfortable talking in this manner, the presence of a "testigo indiscreto" (95), Prudencia, breaks their privacy and sense of comfort. Symbolically Prudencia is carrying a candle which not only can illuminate the space she is walking in but which can only "bring to light" and make public Amparo and Caballero's middle-class intimacy. Amparo, feeling that the servant has seen them both in the darkness and fearing that she might judge them indecent for staying alone without light, decides to come out of the room and create a

conversation with Prudencia: “pero como Amparo sospechase que la moza había mirado hacia el interior de la oscura estancia, salió y dijo: --¡Cuánto tarda la señora!” (95).

In this manner, the novel’s emphasis on working women’s excess in their role as communicators, as gossipers, reveals middle-class anxieties about the constant presence of the domestic service and surveillance in their homes and the fear of public opinion. In this respect, Bridget Aldaraca states that in nineteenth-century bourgeois society “[t]he ultimate social authority, public opinion, is an impregnable power; nameless and faceless, the public voice emanates from no definable source. It is free to create and destroy reputations and cannot be controlled” (*Ángel del hogar* 71). It is not strange that in many cultural representations of this time, female servants are depicted as a threatening presence and as social police always ready to spread the word about their employers’ flaws and personal matters.⁷ That is the case, for instance of Ana’s maid, Petra, who reveals the secret of Ana’s infidelity in Leopoldo Alas Clarín’s novel *La Regenta*. Paradoxically, however, it is also important to notice that the narrator himself holds the same excessive communicative attributes and surveillance abilities that he attributes to these working-class women. Let’s not forget that eventually it is thanks to his “gran locuacidad” and indiscreet presence at the level of the narration that the reader knows about Amparo’s or the de Bringas family’s story.

⁷ Whereas low-class female workers are partly or totally defined by their inclination to talk “too much” and gossip—both traits traditionally seen as female flaws,—their male counterpart, Felipe, Agustín’s servant, is the reflection of his master. Honest, intelligent, and faithful, this “sabio Aristóteles” (173) is bright enough to perceive Rosalía’s personality and intentions and to prevent Amparo’s attempt to commit suicide. Felipe, as a man, is the only working-class character that attains perfection and does not suffer from any excessive trait in the novel.

2.2. Reconfiguring the Domestic Space: The Self-Made Women in Pardo Bazán's "Casi artista" and "El mundo" (1908)

As a female writer who did not respect "the norms of literary conduct established by . . . respectable women writers who preached an ideology of domesticity," Bazán was often accused of "not 'knowing her place'" (Tolliver 20-1). This self-defined "radical feminista" (qtd. in Gómez Ferrer 330) dedicated much of her fictional production, essays, and public talks to the feminist cause. Influenced by the end-of-the-century regenerative debates taking place in Spain, Countess Pardo Bazán believed that the only way to foster the necessary modernization and socioeconomic improvement of Spain was to offer women a proper education that would allow them to become independent and productive individuals in the nation's economy. In her opinion, "hay que reírse de los demás problemas nacionales; la clave de nuestra regeneración está en la mujer" (qtd. in Gómez Ferrer 330). As Gómez Ferrer has pointed out,

la escritora tiene muy claro que el atraso y la incuria en que se encuentra la mujer española constituye una clave para entender el atraso del país. Lo raro y lo que llama profundamente su atención es que a pesar de ser muchos los que se afanan en buscar la raíz de los 'males de la patria' apenas nadie caiga en la cuenta de la correlación que puede haber entre estos factores. (335)

The Countess understood that without access to proper education, women were bound to remain under male control, static in their role as mothers and wives and living to fulfill the other's desires and needs. In this sense, the notion of the home as a static and atemporal space acquires a negative taint in Pardo Bazán's mind: "Error profundo,

imaginar que adelantará la raza mientras la mujer se estacione. Al pararse la mujer, párase todo; el hogar detiene la evolución, y como no es posible estancarse enteramente, vendrá el retroceso” (qtd. in Gómez Ferrer 309). In spite of the initial ideological premises of the 1868 revolution which claimed freedom and equality, women’s immobility in the home remains, by the end of the century, a desirable trait in the definition of decent femininity as seen by either liberal or traditional middle-class males: “[L]a distancia social entre los dos sexos es hoy mayor que era en España antigua, porque el hombre ha ganado derechos y franquicias que la mujer no comparte” (Pardo Bazán “La mujer española” 89). Thus,

[p]ara el español, por más liberal y avanzado que sea, no vacilo en decirlo, el ideal femenino no está en el porvenir, ni aun en el presente, sino en el pasado. [Él] la quiere metida en una campana de cristal que la aisle del mundo exterior por medio de la ignorancia (Pardo Bazán “La mujer española” 87-8).

To speed up the process of modernization in the country and have Spain occupy a place of preference among the “civilized” Western nations, women’s role should not be limited to their domestic role as *ángeles del hogar*. Since women possess the same intellectual capacities as men, they should also receive the same education which would allow them to enter the public realm and perform different jobs.

Indeed, female labor is central to the understanding of Pardo Bazán’s feminist agenda. As she expressed throughout her literary production and by her own example, women should attain economic independence from the males of their family to escape from a “perpetua infancia” (“La mujer española” 102). Female work, however, should

not be limited to jobs usually considered as “feminine” such as sewing and domestic service but to those in accord with women’s intellectual abilities and desires. In spite of writing from a privileged position, Pardo Bazán saw the value of the work performed, not only by female intellectuals and aristocrats, but also by the working classes.

Within working class female labor, she was also able to differentiate between the most “traditional” and “feminine” female labor—and therefore, the most socially accepted—and the female labor which remained either invisible or misrepresented in most cultural discourses of her time. For instance, in the report she wrote about “La exposición de trabajos de la mujer” regarding the Spanish exhibit in the 1893 World’s Columbian World Fair in Chicago, although mostly satisfied with the items shown in the fair such as “bordados en su infinita variedad, encajes y libros” (234), Pardo Bazán complains about the lack of representation of industrial and agricultural female labor. Similarly, when referring to the Spanish embroideries and laces presented at the exhibit, the author does not limit herself to describing the material richness, quality, and aesthetic beauty of these items. The writer also gives a detailed account of the hardships, effort, and hard labor that lie behind such precious pieces of work. Generally, Pardo Bazán sees it as a positive step that women’s work is represented at all at the exposition since she interprets this as “un signo de los tiempos” (239) which responds to a wider change in the position of women in society.

Whereas Pardo Bazán was aware of the fact that most working-class women were emancipated due to “la necesidad” (“La mujer española” 116), she admired their sense of duty and determination to work. On the other hand, she strongly disapproved of middle-class women whose education was aimed at the fulfillment of their only destiny: a good

marriage. These ideas are even more prominent in a series of articles published in the journal “La España moderna” under the title “La mujer española.” In “La mujer española” the author classifies Spanish women according to two categories: their geographical location and their class. Work is also a determining factor in Pardo Bazán’s representation of these women, especially in regard to bourgeois and working-class women. As noticed above, for the Galician writer, working-class women deserve her admiration since, for the working-class woman “[el] trabajo es un deber” (108) and “trabaja lo mismo que una leona” (110).

While it is true that Pardo Bazán has a high regard for working-class women’s sense of work and endurance and wants the general public to be informed about these issues, she also falls prey to the prejudices of her own cultural location. Speaking from the perspective of a high-class woman, the author also represents working-class women in essentialist terms, reinforcing nineteenth-century stereotypes of working-class women constructed in relation to their national/regional identity. As a result, the Catalan female worker epitomizes the modern woman due to “el orden, la primorosa sencillez del limpio vestir, el espíritu agenciador y práctico, la aspiración a las comodidades ganadas con el sudor de su rostro, y un resorte de firme independencia, hijo de su propia consagración al trabajo” (109). On the contrary, her characterization of “la chula” or *castiza* working-class Madrilenian woman still retains the essentialist female traits often found in *costumbrista* literature already explored in the first section of this chapter. In this manner, *la chula madrileña*, encapsulating the essence of national tradition and Spanishness,

tiene las manos tan sueltas y prontas como la lengua: es capaz de armar quimera con el lucero del alba; . . . de quitarse la ropa que lleva puesta

para socorrer una necesidad; los rasgos generosos, picarescos y discretos alternan en ella con los de grosería, descaró y barbarie . . . [S]us acciones, siempre resueltas, siempre hijas del corazón o de la imaginación, nunca del raciocinio, enamoran por su misma viveza irreflexiva . . . [Y] siempre ostenta ese carácter de violencia y desenfreno que le distinguen de los tenaces y honrados amoríos de provincias. (109-10)

However, whereas Pardo Bazán feels seduced by the atavistic, uncivilized, and passionate personality of this “mujer del pueblo,” a product of eighteenth and nineteenth-century middle-class—more often than not—male discourse, she is not that benevolent in her portrayal of bourgeois women. In my opinion, this is in part due to the fact that Pardo Bazán, who considered herself an aristocrat, felt that the social boundaries between the emergent higher-middle-class bourgeoisie and the nobility were progressively erased. The social elements of differentiation and superiority which had historically defined the aristocracy were becoming blurred. This threatening proximity did not occur, though, with the working classes for obvious reasons.

Beyond the writer’s classist anxieties about the middle-class, there is also another type of critique that she carries out with a more pertinent and objective logic about bourgeois females. Also in “La mujer española,” the author explores with incisive eye the character and nature of the Spanish middle-class woman, whom she describes as suffering from “mayor dependencia, menos originalidad y espontaneidad” than the working-class woman for “la del pueblo tiene la noción de que debe ganar su vida; la burguesa cree que ha de sostenerla exclusivamente el trabajo del hombre” (101). Since middle-class women are raised to follow the assumed belief that “Las señoritas no tienen

más carrera que el matrimonio” (101), their education only satisfies the bourgeois male’s desire to possess a wife with “[un] barniz o apariencia que la haga ‘presentable’” (102). Women belonging to this social class are forced to maintain their status as “señoras o señoritas” (100) in order to keep up with social appearances of decency and decorum. For these females, working for wages to make a living, especially in manual and industrial jobs, would be like “[cometer] un crimen [y] la clase social a que pertence[n] la[s] expulsaría de sus filas si supiese que cometía[n] la incongruencia de hacer algo más que ‘gobernar su casa!’” (101). That is why, in times of need, some of these women resort to work secretly for wages at home, a job that Pardo Bazán describes as “trabajo vergonzante” (101). As noticed before, both Scanlon and Capel Martínez define “obreras vergonzantes” as bourgeois female workers whose wage work, if made public, would be perceived as shameful by their own social class (Scanlon 85, Capel Martínez, *Trabajo* 171). In this case then, it is not only the spatial division of society according to gender that delimits women’s social dignity and decency, but the type of activity performed within the domestic walls as well. Embroidering for domestic use is acceptable, but not when this very same labor acquires exchange value and becomes a commodity and, therefore, a source of income for women.

Middle-class women’s labor could not enter the public sphere of economic exchange because that would entail the subversion of the predominant middle-class male discourse of *ángel del hogar* which established the home as a secure haven for its family members isolated from the vice and chaos of the public space and capitalism. According to this discourse, bourgeois women were the antithesis of economic exchange (often embodied by the sexually corrupt body of the prostitute who sells her labor). Were they

to work for wages, middle-class women would break the dichotomous relationship between home/public, female/male dependent/provider, allowing the immorality of the public sphere (the commodification of their work) to penetrate the home. Ultimately, women's economic independence would imply their autonomy as subjects, the erasure of male control and hence the destruction of the foundations onto which middle-class masculinity was built.

Pardo Bazán expresses a similar idea in a later article written in 1915 for the journal "La Ilustración Artística." In this article, she talks about the idea that came to her while attending the distribution of prizes by the *Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País* to the best female stenography students: thanks to their studies, these young women would be able to find jobs, contribute to the family's economy and attain their own independence later on. The author, however, believes that there is an important obstacle that prevents most middle-class young women from "conquistarse un modo de vivir, . . . luchar por la subsistencia[:] ¡El decoro!" (302). Decorum is like "[un] [g]rillo a los pies, esposa a las manos" for bourgeois women which impedes their desire to "obtener colocaciones útiles y fructuosas" (302). For Pardo Bazán, waged work would solve the economic difficulties faced by many modest middle-class families whose numerous children are predominantly female. These young women could be educated and trained to perform a wide range of jobs such as gardener, hairdresser, and cook—jobs which would provide them with the essential economic means. Apart from the existence of laws which prevented women from working in many jobs, the bourgeois concept of female decorum and shame rendered certain types of jobs as indecent when performed by a "señorita," while it made permissible other non-remunerated tasks, such as domestic embroidery. For

the author, “[l]o mismo que hacen bordaditos que les estropean los ojos, podrían hacer el lindo trabajo de la mosaicultura, combinando flores con follajes” (303).

Apart from her essays and public talks, Pardo Bazán wrote several novels and short stories in which women’s education and work are central to the plot. For instance, in *Memorias de un solterón* (1896), the female protagonist, Feíta, struggles to be intellectually and economically independent from traditional conceptions of women’s submission and immobility. On the other hand, the novel *La Tribuna* (1882) portrays the coming of age of a tobacco factory working girl, Amparo, in the provincial city of Marineda. Considered as her first naturalist novel, *La Tribuna* is also one of the first Spanish novels whose plot revolves around the proletariat and, in particular, around working-class female labor. Pardo Bazán also authored a vast number of short stories in which her feminist point of view prevailed, such as “El encaje roto” or “Champagne,” where she criticizes the institution of marriage that relegates women to a subordinate position. At a time when the short story was at its height thanks to the rise in literacy in Spain and the affordability and mass-production of periodicals where short stories were published, “Pardo Bazán employed the story to transgress established boundaries and challenge the status quo” (McKenna 32).

Whereas the novel *La Tribuna* and other short stories such as “Champagne” or “Náufragas” deal with the figure of the working woman, they do so locating these female characters’ workplace in public spaces such as the factory or the beerhall. Following Joan M. Hoffman’s spatial classification of Pardo Bazán’s short stories in which working women are portrayed, I will analyze “Casi artista” and “El mundo,” written in 1908. Both short stories specifically focus on the reconfiguration of the domestic realm as a

workplace by “Obreras de la Aguja”—needle female workers (Capel Martínez, *Trabajo* 165).

As seen in the introduction to the present chapter, Pardo Bazán also gave fictional representation to the exploitation of female needle workers. For instance, in her novel *La Tribuna*, the Galician author portrays the character of Carmela, Amparo’s neighbor.

Whereas Amparo, as a cigarmaker, receives many of the advantages of working at the factory such as economic independence, sense of self-worth, and the support of a strong female community, the lace worker Carmela languishes at home consumed by her poorly remunerated and exhausting job: “descolorida como siempre . . . al tablero, disimulaba su talle encorvado ya por la habitual labor; pero no sus ojos marchitos y cansados de fijarse en la blancura del hilo” (140). On top of that, Carmela faces the competition of numerous lace workers which forces her to reduce the price of her work, a fact described by Capel Martínez as a common problem at that time (*Trabajo* 170). She realizes that “Es mejor hacer pitillos que encajes, chica. ¡Fumar, siempre fuma la gente; pero los encajes en invierno... es como vivir de coser telarañas!” (204). Her future as a lace worker seems to be pretty bleak. At best, she will end up like her own aunt “medio ciega; . . . sólo sirve para ir por las casas a vender lo que yo trabajo...” (142). Fortunately, playing the lotto Carmela obtains the dowry to become a nun. When Amparo asks her friend whether she will be happy stuck indoors, the lace worker replies: “Bien presa vivo yo desde que acuerdo... Siquiera los conventos tienen huerta, y vería una árboles y verduras que le alegrasen el corazón” (144).

Although home-bound female workers experienced one of the worst labor conditions during this time, historians Boris and Daniels claim that in some instances,

working at home also brought certain advantages to women (6). For instance, home-based working women enjoyed a more flexible working schedule and were in command of their own work without the constant presence of a boss. At the same time, working at home also allowed them to care more closely for the children and other people for whom they were responsible: "From this perspective, then, homework represents not exploited labor but the attempts of women to find more humane alternatives to a labor market alien to the needs of working parents" (Boris and Daniels 6). Such is the case of the needle-working women characters who appear in both "Casi artista" and "El mundo," two women who, in spite of their gender and class, achieve economic independence, self-esteem and control over their lives through their paid labor at home.

"Casi artista" tells the story of a carpenter's wife, Dolores "la Cartera," whose drunkard and womanizing husband, Frutos, abandons her and her two children. Without her husband's scarce economic contribution to their home, Dolores finds herself asking for work. After some time, she builds up a career and social status as a skillful seamstress until her husband reappears and threatens to destroy her work and economic prosperity. In a fit of rage, Dolores beats Frutos and while he tries to flee from her, he trips, falls down the stairs and dies.

The story begins with the narrator's description of Dolores' return to her house after looking for her husband in the city of Marineda: "Después de una semana de zarandeo, del Gobierno civil a las oficinas municipales, y de las tabernas al taller donde él trabajaba, [se] retiró a su tugurio" (1). Her continuous drifting from one place to the other is presented as an itinerary of shame through the public spaces of Marineda, for she is forced to take to the streets and become "public" "preguntado a todos y a 'todas'"

(315) in an attempt to find her husband, the man who society has rendered the breadwinner of the family. Dolores' body in constant and forced movement in these public spaces becomes a referent of the pain—which relates to her name—and shame that her husband has caused when leaving her: “con los ojos como puños y el pañuelo echado a la cara para esconder el sofoco de la vergüenza” (315). Had Frutos complied with his role as provider, following the nineteenth-century dominant discursive regime of masculinity, her presence in such spaces would not have taken place.

As a woman and therefore, without jurisdictional authority according to the 1889 civil code, her visit to institutional spaces such as the “Gobierno civil” and the town offices would have been an unusual sight. Likewise, her presence at the exclusively male space of a carpenters' workshop where her husband supposedly works would also have been an uncommon practice since workplaces were often segregated by gender. And finally, the only women to be seen in taverns—conceptualized as strictly male spaces of leisure—were prostitutes, probably those “todas” who Dolores had to ask about her husband's whereabouts. There is no doubt that her visit to all these spaces where the presence of a (decent) woman would be extraordinary and unsettling, heightens Dolores' feeling of humiliation caused by her husband's abandonment. In this manner, the city is configured for the character as a geography of shame in which dominant structures of feeling, social formations and locations conflate.

If the urban public space represents a site of embarrassment for Dolores, the house, described as a “tugurio” (hovel) is far from symbolizing a welcoming place either. However, when she comes back from her last search in the city, the loneliness of the house gives her time to reflect on her situation and her previous experience of shame. In

tears, she laments her husband's abandonment and ponders what to do to feed her children. What Pardo Bazán presents here is a dilemma which many women faced at the time: what is a woman supposed to do when her husband fails to provide for her and her children? Whereas the law does not punish Frutos for his lack of responsibility towards his family and his departure for America, Dolores has to take charge of her family without any type of state provision which would facilitate her access to a job or the care of her children while she is at work. In this way, her shameful exposure in the city has a cathartic effect on Dolores which helps her take command over her life. Thus, as Pamela Fox suggests "serving a demystifying role, shame can thus function as a key to, rather than accomplice of, dominant ideology" (16). Indeed shame "may also confront one with unrecognized desires of one's own and the inadequacy of society in giving expression to these desires" (Lynd qtd. in Fox 16).

Dolores, coming to terms with her situation,

[a]cordóse de que allá en tiempos fue pizpireta aprendiz en un taller que surtía de ropa blanca Casada, había olvidado la aguja, y ahora, ante la necesidad, volvía a pensar en su dedal de acero gastado por el uso y sus tijeras sutiles pendientes de la cintura. (316)

The working-class woman resorts to her previous experience as a seamstress apprentice to earn some money working from home "pues no podía abandonar a las criaturas" (316). However, the first time that she ventures to the warehouse where they will provide her with the material to work, her feeling of shame still accompanies her: "A boca de noche, abochornada, . . . se deslizó en el almacén" (316).

Dolores feels that asking for a job is shameful, for it means that her husband does not comply with society's rules and she has failed to keep him happy in their home. Yet, the narrative voice intervenes with a comment right after “abochornada”—¡como si fuera ella quien hubiese hecho el mal!—emphasizing the character's unnecessary guilt over a situation that she cannot control. Although understanding the social origins of her shame—a woman asking for work does not fit the ideal of femininity,—Dolores should not be embarrassed to look for a job since she is doing the right thing according to the sympathetic narrative voice.

Sewing and embroidering at home allows her to take care of her children in spite of the fact that the amount of money that she receives for her work is “irrisoria” (316). As in her articles, Pardo Bazán uses this short story to criticize home working and the conceptualization of certain jobs as feminine. Mary Nash points to the fact that home-bound seamstresses' working conditions at the turn of the century “eran deplorables” (316). As previously seen in the study of her essays, Pardo Bazán is aware of the lack of economic and social consideration entertained by certain jobs performed exclusively by women. One of these jobs is that of seamstress of white clothing, since there was “nada peor pagado” (316). In her essay on the representation of female labor at the Universal World Fair in Chicago, Pardo Bazán states:

Confieso que si mi naturaleza femenina me induce a recrearme en la delicadeza y finura de un lindo bordado, mi razón y mi piedad por la mujer me inspiran cierta antipatía y guerra a la labor de aguja. Pena causa imaginar la paciencia, el tiempo, el derroche de vista, las interminables horas de encierro que representan esas labores (qtd. in Gómez Ferrer 235).

In this case, Dolores' strong will and efforts have good results. After describing Dolores' visit to the warehouse, the intradiegetic time moves forward some years. Then, the narrator presents Dolores when she lives and works in a modest apartment where she has her own needlework workshop and employees. Her delicate embroideries and laces gained her an abundant clientele and helped her to establish a successful career. In this new and clean space, and without economic worries, Dolores has experienced a transformation. From being a poor and badly-dressed woman, she turns into "una pulcra trabajadora, semiartista" (317) who considers her work more than a mere mechanic activity to earn money: it is an expression of her artistic self. Cleanliness, also an important signifier in the middle-class system of signification, allows Dolores to construct a proper public self which is key to her commercial enterprise. Furthermore, the perfection, neatness, and devotion that she invests in her work "se había comunicado a todo su vivir" (317). Thus, female work, apart from being elevated to the rank of art, is also a positive practice that far away from destroying women's decency as many argued at the time, strengthens good personality traits.

In this vein, and following Fuentes Peris analysis of the Galdosian character of Torquemada, Dolores "although from humble origins, does not fit neatly into the middle-class perception of the lower classes as lacking in moral traits. On the contrary, [s]he displays respectable values, such as sobriety, temperance, independence, self-improvement, hard work and thrift, which were traditionally held to be bourgeois in complexion" (141). Indeed, to make sure that the connection between working-class female labor and decency is clear enough, the narrative voice highlights how Dolores "guardaba su honra con cuidado religioso . . . porque esas cosas estropean la vida y dan

mal nombre” (317). As Pamela Fox observes, “Reputation was a prime concern in working-class culture, across regions and borders, and proved burdensome, as well as empowering” (98). Such a view expounds the fact that “values traditionally regarded as the preserve of the bourgeoisie . . . were not exclusively middle class but had a long tradition within the working classes” (Fuentes Peris 142n3). Similarly, if Dolores aims to keep her home business running and her clientele happy, she must worry not only about the spotlessness of the white garments she creates but also about the reputation of her own body as a social sign. In this sense, her work is also a trope of her own body and self.

Nevertheless, Dolores’ tidiness and entrepreneurial success is threatened by her husband’s unexpected return. Although Frutos agrees at first to respect “su negocio, su industria ya fundada, su arte elegante” (318) and enjoy a carefree life supported by his wife’s income, his “orgullo de varón y dueño tampoco se avenía a aquella dependencia” (318). Immersed in a notion of masculinity which does not fit Dolores’ new occupational context, Frutos insists on regaining his position of authority—but not of provider—at “his” house. As the man of the house, he believes that he has the right to occupy and move around the domestic space at ease without following his wife’s requirements. Frutos forgets an important factor, though: he is not the provider anymore. Moreover, the domicile is no longer just a domestic space, it is also Dolores’ workplace where she creates and sells her meticulous white creations. Whereas she does not care about her husband flirting with her employees at the workshop, she fears that his dirty habits might spoil her products. Thus, Dolores asks him to stay away from her work in a threatening tone: “Si te gustan las oficialas llévatelas a todas... pero fuera de aquí, ¿entiendes? A un

sitio en que tus diversiones no me manchen la labor. ¡Eso no! Eso no te lo aguanto, y te lo aviso... ¡No me toca a mis encargos un puerco como tú!” (318). Ignoring her warnings and with an evil intention, Frutos becomes even more disrespectful of his wife’s creations— “Escupía en el suelo, tiraba los cigarros sin mirar, manoseaba las prendas, se ponía las enaguas bromeando” (318)—which contributes to worsening the quality of Dolores’ work and undermining her patience.

One day, while a future bride and her family are taking a look at the bride’s troasseau at the workshop, Frutos bursts into the house making use of coarse language and manners. The offended bride’s party leaves the house in a hurry, assuring that they will let their friends know about the incident. Dolores, “pálida [pero] tranquila” (319) confronts her husband and warns him that she will not allow him to act the same way again, and that she will throw him out of the house next time. Frutos’ reaction is quick: in defiance, he grabs “las blancuras vaporosas de tela diáfana, orladas de encajes preciosos, las [echa] al suelo, danzando encima con sus zapatos sucios” (319). Frutos had already shown disrespect and violence toward his wife’s work the first time he came back from America to Dolores’ house. On this occasion, he throws a cigarette butt carelessly and burns a beautiful immaculate lace. Now, after chasing away the bride’s party, he tramples on these delicate pieces of work, while he states that they are “payaserías” (319). As in “El encaje roto” or “La punta del cigarro,” the burnt or trampled lace or delicate cloth in “Casi artista” symbolizes men’s aggression against and potential physical abuse of women. In this story, the lace, the epitome of femininity and devoted female labor, is despised by a misogynist masculinity which, unable to appreciate the material and emotional value invested in it, destroys it. Thus, Dolores’ self-pride and love for her

manual labor, her long hours of meticulous work and effort meet Frutos' disdain and violence.

Then, the unexpected happens. Dolores, “la pacífica, la mansa, la sufrida de tantos años, se había vuelto leona” (319). Although Charnon-Deutch claims that in Pardo Bazán’s short stories “never is a woman’s victim a man” (78), it is obvious that this is not the case in “Casi artista.” Furious, the seamstress physically assaults her husband in an uncontrollable and violent fit. Her body, always docile, experiences the effects of rage, discharging its ferocity against the man: “Sus manos arañaron, sus pies magullaron, la vara de metrar puntilla fue arma terrible” (319). In this manner, through her bodily aggression, Dolores, the artist, defends “el ideal de hermosura cifrado en la obra” (319), the aura emanating from her work of art, resisting the patriarchal perspective which grants it worthless. Joyce Tolliver points out Pardo Bazán’s special interest in portraying people’s reactions to “minor incidents” as an “indicative of their characters” (66). Such is the case, Tolliver states, of “El encaje roto,” “La punta del cigarro,” or “Champagne.” In “Casi artista,” however, the incident that sparks a drastic transformation in the main character is not “minor” but the utmost importance to Dolores: her work of art and means of sustainability. Driven by her anger against Frutos, she chases him out of the house. Unfortunately, he stumbles in his way down the stairs, knocking his head and dying. At that precise moment, looking at her husband’s inert body, Dolores’s body fills with a sense of realization and astonishment: “[ella], atónita, no comprendía... ¿Era ella quien había sacudido así? ¿Era ella la que todavía apretaba la vara hecha astillas...?” (319). Dolores’ special circumstances—her love for her work and the presence of her rude and dirty husband in the workshop—determine her final unpredictable behavior. In this

fashion, this short story, influenced by the suffused use of naturalistic narrative elements—the detailed description of violent acts, *tipo* characters like Frutos, and degraded spaces like Dolores’ first house—offers an ending which is far away from the determinism found in naturalist novels. Commenting on the unpredictability of nineteenth-century short stories, Charnon-Deutsch states that “[s]ince the story, as a form, is more end-oriented than the novel, this predictability [of Naturalist novels] would be unbearable to most readers of short stories” (83). The economy of the short story requires then not only a brief and efficient description of characters, spaces and events, but also the elaboration of an ending which concludes the story in unexpected ways that puzzle and surprise the reader.

In “Casi artista,” although Frutos’ presence foreshadows and determines the final outcome of the story, Dolores’ violent reaction does not fit the predictability of naturalism’s characters. On the contrary, Dolores’ reaction is the culmination of the poetics and politics of this short story. Aesthetically, Pardo Bazán has to recur to the unexpected—a woman’s violent fit codified by a lexicon belonging to the semantic field of physical violence (“arañaron,” “magullaron,” “arma terrible,” “apaleado,” “subyugado”)—to build an effective conclusion to the narrative. But, ideologically, the author subverts the reader’s expectations portraying a violent act carried out by a woman instead of a man. In doing so, the author is dismantling hegemonic ideas of society which rendered women docile and incapable of any violence. At the same time, Pardo Bazán places female labor at the center of the climax of the story, conferring it such high value that its destruction brings about the creator’s rage. Dolores’ embroideries are thus given a new status not only as the source of her income but also for their artistic value.

The author also scrutinizes and denaturalizes the nineteenth-century cultural myth that envisioned male artists as the ones capable of artistic creation. In this line of thought, men, unlike women, who were limited to their biological creation and thus remained in the realm of nature and emotion, were able to go beyond materialism and reach abstract thinking. As Andreas Huyssen states “[i]t is indeed striking to observe how the political, psychological, and aesthetic discourse around the turn of the century consistently and obsessively genders mass culture and the masses as feminine, while high culture, whether traditional or modern, clearly remains the privileged realm of male activities” (47). In this vein, the Countess counteracts “the tradition of women’s exclusion from the realm of ‘high art’” (Huyssen 47) by the ascription of an aesthetic aura or “ideal de hermosura” to female work. What is more, Pardo Bazán’s move to undermine high art as the prerogative of the male elite is doubled, for it is not only a woman who can become an artist with her perfect creations but a woman who belongs to the working class. Therefore, at a time when both the working class and women—“the masses ‘rattling at the gate’” (Stuart Hall qtd. in Huyssen 47)—were associated with mass culture or “low” quality culture, the Galician author dismantles such perspective at the levels of both gender and class. In Dolores’ character there converges both the biological ability to “(re)produce” children and the intellectual ability for artistic and (economically) productive “creation.” Therefore, Dolores reterritorializes the private realm of female reproduction, the home, by incorporating economic and artistic productivity, a male activity restricted to the public realm as deemed by dominant conceptions of private and public spaces at the time.

The other short story I will analyze is titled “El mundo.” It deals with two middle-class sisters, Dionisia and Germana, who find themselves on the verge of poverty after

their mother tells them that they have wasted their fortune. They do not even have money to pay for the medicines that their mother, very ill and bedridden, needs. Germana, taking charge of the situation, manages to start a business at home as couturier and dressmaker in order to make a living in view of her mother's impending and eventual death. As analyzed below, Germana reconfigures the domestic space through the adoption of a financial bourgeois system of signification that exhibits the signifiers that are profitable and in circulation and discards those that are wasteful. In this sense, "El mundo" illustrates the nineteenth-century "discussion of notions of 'profit', 'productivity' and 'utility' [which] was becoming commonplace in intellectual life. These ideas arose from the new ideology of economic liberalism and scientific rationalism which confronted the 'waste' and 'inefficiency' characteristics of pre-modern modes of production" (Fuentes Peris xi). By adopting such discourse of 'waste and profit' in her short story, Pardo Bazán demonstrates the fabricated nature of the idea of the home as detached from capitalism and the public sphere.

The reader of Pardo Bazán's short story finds both sisters in a meaningful location at the beginning of the story. Dionisia and Germana are almost running into each other in the corridor of their house, as they rush to perform different tasks to take care of their mother: "Las dos hermanas se encontraron en el estrecho pasillo: casi se tropezaron . . . La mayor, Dionisia, venía del cuarto de la madre enferma, trayendo una taza de caldo, vacía ya; la mejor, Germana, de la cocina, de calentar or sus manos un parche cáustico" (311). The introduction by the narrative voice of these two middle-class women's physical movement and dynamism within the home is quite telling. On the one hand, their presence in the narrow corridor, conceived in architecture as a transitory space

which serves to get from one place to another, symbolizes change, temporality and lack of a fixed position both in the domestic realm and in the social structure in which the sisters find themselves. The corridor thus evokes Germana and Dionisia's tight financial situation as impoverished middle-class women, whose position in bourgeois social status is starting to crumble. At the same time, the fact that these two women rush around the house performing different tasks additionally draws attention to their poor economic situation since they cannot afford to hire maids to do that type of work. Nonetheless, the narrative voice is sympathetic with their suffering and hard work in an interesting way: "La penosa y quebrantadora faena de enfermeras, la vigilia y las inquietudes, habían empalidecido y ajado sus caras graciosas, donde esplendía antes, fresca y atractiva, la 'belleza del diablo' " (311). The reality of life, the lack of sleep, worries and stress caused by the care of the very ill mother have undermined not only their youth and energy but also "la 'belleza del diablo'."

Nancy Tuana, in her book *The Less Noble Sex* writes about how women have been traditionally considered as morally inferior to men in the Western world since ancient times. Specifically, the second creation myth of Genesis helped construct women as wicked and morally inferior: "It was Eve whose weakness led to the fall of Adam and to the sickness, toil, and death that all humans must endure" (Tuana 79). Christian images of woman emphasize her lack of morality as a result of her inability to control her sexuality or, "[i]n other words, because of the strength of her passions, woman is willing to reject the Christian faith and ally with Satan in order to find sexual satisfaction" (Tuana 79, 81). Religious beliefs had a strong influence on how eighteenth and nineteenth-century science and philosophy constructed women. The theories presented by

Kant, Rousseau or Spencer concluded that women, because of their lack of moral abilities, needed to be subjugated by men in order to channel their instincts. Indeed, “[w]oman under control is a help to man; woman out of control is his destruction” (Tuana 86). Pardo Bazán was clearly aware of such misogynist discourse as her own essays and fictional work demonstrate. By opposing the material realities of life with the masculinist perspective on female beauty, the narrative voice both infuses the sisters’ experience with realism while dismantling the old metaphysical and religious tradition which assimilates women to evil. Such artificial conceptualization of woman as seductress clashes with the construction of both female characters who will not please a traditional masculinist reader. On the contrary, far from falling into the dichotomic classification of the angel of the hearth and home vs. the whore, Pardo Bazán offers an alternative and more pragmatic perspective closely anchored in the realities of women in everyday life. What is more, self-control and discipline is what characterizes Germana. Thus, when their mother tells them “Estamos completamente arruinadas, y aún peor: estamos alcanzadas en seis mil y pico de duros” (312), Germana is “la primera en dominarse” (312). She understands the waste that lamenting their situation means and with strong determination, presents her sister with the solution to their misery: “—Trabajaremos—decidió Germana prontamente—. Y desde hoy mismo. No en balde nos llaman Manitas de oro. No creas que aguardaré a que mamá se muera, a que nos echen de casa y perdamos nuestra única esperanza de salvación. . . . No vamos a dejar en vergüenza la memoria de mamá” (312).

The prospect of family shame serves as a motivation for Germana to avoid it through her sister’s and her own manual labor. In addition, and as her statement shows, the girl wants to start working “desde hoy mismo” for she will not wait until they are

evicted from their home. In associating work with time and profit, Germana echoes the nineteenth-century discourse on utilitarian ethic in which “the waste of capital [was] represented by non-productive time” (Fuentes Peris 2). For the girl, the time that elapses without both sisters working means economic loss. Thus, Germana envisions the immediate exploitation of their excellent ability to sew—“Manitas de oro”— as an escape from their poverty.

However, her plan of earning money sewing is more elaborate than that. In fact, as she herself tells her sister: “habrá que trabajar de otro modo” in order to settle their debt and even to have enough money “[como] para volver a tener un coche” (312). Without wasting any time, Germana dresses up “con elegancia y coquetería” (312) and, after renting a horse cab, ventures into the city to visit “amigas de antaño, que se mostraban frías, o, por lo menos, alejadas, desde el momento en ‘que la de Ramos’ se encontraron en mala situación económica” (312-3). She does not move about the city by walking, but “tomó un coche” (313) in order to carry out the visits she has planned. Wearing her elegant dress and a posy of violets in her lapel, she proudly presents herself to her friends with an interesting narration articulated “no en tono suplicante, sino como el que pide lo que se le debe” (313). The brief description that she narrates to the women she visits about her family’s economic situation is immediately followed by a total different discourse. Germana is aware that her discourse cannot remain in the space of shame or pity and she is able to read the social signs shown by her audience which encode middle-class society’s rejection of downward mobility. Thus, the girl is able to interpret “las nubes de descontento y precaución que iban cubriendo la faz de sus interlocutoras” (313) when she describes her family’s lack of economic status. Thanks to

her ability to decipher such social signs, Germana immediately infuses her discourse with new meanings: “En vista de esto [her family’s financial problems], hemos resuelto ser en breve más ricas que nunca” (313). Such a statement is far from a discourse of shame or pity and, on the contrary, elevates the subject to a state of power. Knowing that a discourse of shame will only create distrust and rejection from her middle-class female audience, Germana makes use of an economic discourse to achieve self-empowerment. Thanks to her plan, not only will her family recover its previous socioeconomic status, but it will become even richer:

Yo tengo disposición, buen gusto, algo de chic. He aceptado la representación de una modista muy elegante de Biarritz, la que nos vestía antes; este traje es de ella... Reproduciremos aquí sus modelos, con alguna rebaja, naturalmente... Haremos toilettes y los sombreros; todo completo. Pago, eso sí, al contado; la modista nos lo exige... Hemos montado taller (313).

Clearly, Germana commands the nineteenth and twentieth-century new economic concepts and discourse of marketing in the Spanish fashion businesses in which image, desire, commodity and economic profit concur and influence each other. The young entrepreneur first talks about her aptitudes for fashion: she has good taste, and what is more, she possesses “chic,” a term adopted from French meaning style, elegance and fashionable. Curiously, during this time in Spanish history “chic” was directly opposed to “*cursi*,” which the *Real Academia Española* defines as “una persona [que] presume de fina y elegante sin serlo” (“*cursi*”). To understand properly “*cursi*”—a term impossible to

translate into English—it has to be located in and analyzed within the socio-historical context in which it became of common use in Spain. As Noël Valis has demonstrated,

[l]o cursi is one of the most pervasive cultural phenomena of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Spain. From mid-nineteenth century on, the Spanish middle classes were nervously obsessed with their appearance, their representation publicly and privately as the newest (and most unstable symbol of success and power). These same middle-classes, with interests and values tied to a burgeoning national identity, had also to contend with the realities of cultural, social, and economic dyssynchronicity, a sharply felt sense of inferiority (in relation to powers like France and England), and insufficiency As a metaphor for the times, lo cursi symbolically captures the sense of inadequacy that a marginalized society in transition experiences when moving from a traditional economy to an industrialized, consumer-oriented economic organization” (*Culture of Cursilería* 32).

Germana, by reconstructing and “selling” her public image as an elegant middle-class woman with a “chic” taste for fashion, evades the term “*cursi*” for being *cursi* “represents the public exposure of inner needs, insufficiencies, and weaknesses, at the same time it suggests a rich dreamworld of frustrated aspirations projected onto an external screen of things and other forms of cultural capital” (Valis, *Culture of Cursilería* 87). On top of this, France stands as the role model to follow in different areas of Spanish middle-class life. Fashion is no exception: “the Spanish middle classes, like those of other national cultures, go about rejecting their class situation by imitating the more attractive models of

the aristocracy and the French or other foreign cultures” (Valis, *Culture of Cursilería* 86).

It is not surprising that Germana claims that she will be the representative of a very elegant couturier from France. She does not even give the couturier’s name for she knows that putting together the words “muy elegante” with the geographical origins of the supposed couturier functions as a great formula for selling her idea.

Thus, Germana presents herself to her prospective customers “decidida, sonriente” (313) in her most elegant dress. She knows how to market herself and the basics of the business. Her attitude, body posture and her dress are an essential part in her commercial enterprise. Even the little posy of violets has a “branding” feature in her business for “la anunciaba con la discreta brisa de su perfume” (313). Germana is also aware of the economic strategies to market her product: at her business, they will offer discounts because, as she tells her potential clients, “Es una ventaja tuya (of the client); vestirás bien con menos sacrificio, y lo que lleves será igual . . . a lo que otras traigan de casa madama Lagaze” (313). However, in exchange for a complete and fashionable product, she asks clients to pay “al contado” because “la modista [se] lo exige” (313). In that manner, stating that it is the French couturier the one that demands clients to pay in cash, she obtains various benefits: at one level, she assures she gets her clients’ money right away avoiding being owed and, at another level, she uses that money to pay the family’s debts. Since it is “her French boss” who asks for cash, she does not have to uncover the fact that she needs that money to pay debts. The appropriation of the economic discourse of the free market by Germana demonstrates that “in this highly charged ‘exchange economy’, individuals increasingly became economic agents, aware of their position in the market place and seeking to maximize personal utility and profit”

(Fuentes Peris16n24). Even the family's domestic space also acquires new meanings of value and profit according to her discourse. Now they have a "taller" (313) at home where they create and make dresses. The house is transformed into a shop window showcasing her creations, probably in one of the only adequate rooms they have "amueblada con cierto lujo, reliquia del bienestar antiguo" (312). The house, like her body, becomes an essential social sign in her business.

Likewise, Germana understands the workings of how information is disseminated in middle-class society and adopts such mechanisms to her own advantage. Leaving her address with every middle-class woman she visits, she requests: "Corre la voz... Ven a casa, a ver los modelitos" (313). Lacking the means to announce herself in the local press, she avails to "word of mouth" communication that, in turn, facilitates her re-entrance into middle-class society as a proper woman who can provide profitable contributions for its members. Through this type of marketing, Germana raises her own social value creating in her customers the desire to buy her dresses on the promise of getting a trendy and inexpensive product.

Her marketing strategy of "Buy the same for less" serves her well to launch her enterprise: "Dos antiguas amigas se encargaron trajes sastres; tres o cuatro desconocidas, abrigos y sombreros; una dama de alto copete pidió el traje de sociedad" (313). As the narrative voice puts it: "Al espejuelo de la elegancia extranjera, la mujer acude" (313).

But the world "espejuelo" which refers to reflection, also uncovers the duplicity of Germana's narrative. The "taller" is simply a room in her house in which "las dos hermanas no dormían, no comían ni vivían" (314). The mannequins are made of "alambre de unas cuantas pulgadas de alto" and the dresses "los confeccionó ella misma,

con trapos suyos” (313). But even more noticeable is the fact that in the house, in the same place where the sisters work and receive their customers, their mother lies dying. Both clients and mother ignore the presence of the one another, and Germana struggles to keep it like this. Still, Pardo Bazán’s story fails to show why the mother is not able to listen to the doorbell or why she does not question the presence of different people at her own house. She does complain about the fact that Germana spends so much time far away from her bedside, but the fact that, when she dies, both sisters clearly hear the doorbell from the mother’s room signals an inconsistency in the construction of the narrative.

The ultimate gesture of economic and social survival takes place right at the moment of their mother’s death. As seen above, both sisters are at her deathbed crying in despair when the doorbell rings. Germana suddenly remembers that it is the client that ordered the formal dress and who comes to try it out. To her sister’s question “¿Vas a recibirla?, ” Germana answers decidedly: “¡Ya lo creo!” (314). But even more interesting is the conversation that the couturier has with the customer once the latter is trying the dress. When the customer ask Germana if she is crying, seeing her in tearful eyes, the girl, in view of the fact that she cannot conceal her tears answers: “Sí, señora. Acabo de saber que se me ha muerto una parienta... allá en Andalucía. [Cercana] No mucho... Pero la queríamos... ¿Le gusta a la señora el escote bajo, o sin hombreras? Ahora se llevan poco...” (314). If Germana wants to see the money she desperately needs she has to hide her real feelings from the client. Revealing the true nature of her emotions, her mothers’ death, would mean that according to society she would need to mourn her death and worry about such an event instead of doing business. In order to cover up the real

location of the death she is sad about and which would cause the client to leave, the couturier has to make up a new spatial demarcation where both emotions and business do not mingle in a dangerous way. In addition, Germana is sad about someone's death and if such person is said to have died far away, such physical distance also means less emotional involvement by the girl in the eyes of the client, which allows the business to continue: "Que no me falte usted mañana, ¿eh? Espero el vestido por la tarde..." (314).

It is in the final paragraph of "El mundo" when the reader gets to know from her own testimony why Germana has covered up her mother's death: "—Si yo confieso mi verdadera situación—decíame Germana al referirme su escondida tragedia—, o me vuelven la espalda o me dan unas perras de limosna... Hay que pedir con soberbia y para lujo; no para comer..." (314). Certainly, as the title of the story also signals, Germana is a *mujer de mundo*, i.e., a person "que trata con toda clase de gente y tiene gran experiencia y práctica en los negocios" ("persona de mundo"). As Hoffman has mentioned, "While [her clients] are content with and convinced by a fantasy of someone else's making, Germana creates a new and more valid truth for herself" (48). Indeed, as a perfect connoisseur of how the structures of feeling within her society intersect with the workings of capitalism, the girl knows that her position in society depends on what she has to offer and, even more important, how she offers it. The "wrapping" of her product includes not only the product itself but also the inclusion of other social signs such as her body, her discourse, the sisters' last name ("Ramos") and even her house. Aware of "the duplicitous nature of the social sign, which never corresponds to what it seems to signify" (Tsuchiya *Images* 101), Germana enters into circulation in society by creating sellable signs whose referents are not necessarily true or real.

In the process of making her product sellable, Germana has to distinguish between that which is profitable/useful and that which is wasteful/useless and how such division translates into what can be seen and what has to remain unseen. Thus, Germana's decision to consider true emotions as waste in a society governed by the principles of capitalism has the effect that she hoped for. As the narrator says, the next day after their mother's burial, "Germana cobraba la primer toilette de las que hicieron la reputación de las famosas hermanas Ramos" (314). Thanks to that order, both sisters establish themselves as famous couturiers in the city. What is more, they establish their name as a brand, for now society knows them as "las famosas hermanas Ramos."

"El mundo" propounds a story of success in comparison to many turn-of-the-century narratives in which impoverished middle-class women end up as prostitutes or subject to their sexualized bodies. As Bieder suggests "Gender emplotment [in Pardo Bazán's short stories] serves to counter the gender expectations of familiar (male) plots and overcome reader resistance to the triumph of the female character" ("Plotting Gender" 141). As in "Casi artista," the main female character is outlined as a self-made woman who struggles against society's traditional views on space, women and work. Moreover, in both stories the protagonists transcend their working-class status. Both Dolores and Germana are not only workers at home but entrepreneurs that reconfigure their houses into successful business. In this fashion, these characters corroborate the fact that "[b]y turning homes into factories and offices, the homework system exposes the separation of home and work life as ideological" (Boris and Daniels 1). Women not only can earn money working at home, they can also be successful business women who learn from their own insight how to manage the economics of their domestic and work roles.

Presented from the angle of the working woman, both short stories emphasize “individual enterprise and achievement, in line with the workings of laissez-faire economics . . . of the period” (Fuentes Peris 24) which shows the permeability of the domestic space to nineteenth-century capitalist discourse and transactions. Interestingly, even though both works participate in the middle-class rhetoric of the “self-made man,” they also subvert it on the grounds of gender construction. Notably, it is two “self-made women,” and not men, the ones who become thriving entrepreneurs at a time when women were barred from the business world. Furthermore, their homes as business are rearticulated as gynocentric spaces since “the clients, the boss, and the employees are all women, the product is both female and feminine, and the rate of investment and exchange fluctuates by means of an intimate mode of female communication” (McKenna 157). Men are not excluded from these businesses, but especially in the case of Dolores, such exclusion is necessary in order for the enterprise to be successful. Following the same trend that some of the *género chico* plays analyzed in the first chapter, the working-class male character is again configured as a ruthless, violent and dirty man who puts at risk working-class female workers’ individuality and success, echoing however middle-class perceptions of the lower class man as immoral. Both Germana’s and Dolores’ workshops “represent a direct threat not only to the market economy but more fundamentally to those structures of private and public spaces that support and maintain the economy” (McKenna 157).

“[T]he plotting of gender” (Bieder, “Plotting Gender” 138) and gendered spaces in both stories is clearly supported by textual conventions that help dismantle and subvert a phallogocentric point of view. In this respect, the narrative voice and the closure

employed in “Casi artista” and “El mundo” are paramount in Pardo Bazán’s rejection of traditional ideologies that undermine women’s independence. For Maryellen Bieder, the Galician author “uses to advantage the assumption of masculine authority with unmarked narrators, creating narratives that suppress clear gender markers . . . to let the reader identify that voice with the reader’s own gendered assumptions about authority” (“Plotting Gender” 141). Indeed, in both short stories the third-person narration is articulated by a narrative voice whose gender is not disclosed at any time. By doing so, the author creates an authoritative narrative voice to which readers at the time were accustomed in order to legitimize her feminist messages. Additionally, unlike in many of Galdos’ works in which the reader finds an unreliable narrator, these two stories are presented by trustworthy narrators who witness and sympathize with Dolores’ and Germana’s struggle.

It is particularly in the ending of both stories that the deployment of such an authoritative narrative voice and a specific type of textual closure come together to reinforce the idea that “Pardo Bazán’s strategies in these texts share in common the tension between a surface conformity to the literary practice and ideology of her contemporaries and a submerged challenge to this practice and its ideological base” (Bieder, “Plotting Gender” 142). In the final paragraph of “Casi artista,” the author’s use of free indirect speech signals the combination of the narrator’s thoughts with those of the character: “¿Era ella quien había sacudido así? ¿Era ella la que todavía apretaba la vara hecha astillas...?” (373). Dolores’ violent reaction to her husband’s misdemeanor is suddenly perceived with disbelief and surprise by both the character and the narrative voice. Such questioning of Dolores’ action underscores the narrative voice’s sympathy

for the female character and the idea that Dolores, in reality, does not possess a violent personality. It actually points at some external reason that has prompted Dolores to become a “leona” and defend that which is hers and is threatened with destruction. Thus, it is in self-defense that Dolores has fought back against the source of her woes: her husband, who now lies dead. The reader is stunned by such a violent reaction coming from a docile working-class woman, the death of her husband and the unresolved future that awaits her. By employing a “framing of dual closure” in which the narrative’s resolution [is left] open-ended” (Bieder, “Plotting Gender” 146), Pardo Bazán devises a new space for the reader to understand the social and personal drawbacks in which a hardworking woman finds herself in order to survive in a world in which women occupy an underprivileged position. Reacting to her husband’s continuous attacks and threats, Dolores finally recurs to violence to expel him from her gynocentric world. Although his death could have been presented by the author as a “closure of poetic justice” (Bieder 148), unfortunately, it places her literally and metaphorically in the public eye. It is now society’s and the reader’s turn to judge what happened and decide her future.

On the other hand, the last paragraph in “El mundo” does make use of a closure of poetic justice through two interconnected textual strategies. On the one hand, it is in this last paragraph that Pardo Bazán presents the protagonist’s testimony and experience in the first person. On the other, it is in this same textual space where the narrator emerges as a character within the story. She or he appears as an intimate friend of Germana and, therefore, as a reliable and sympathetic narrator—“*decíame Germana al referirme su escondida tragedia*” (emphasis added). Obviously, the narrative voice has to be a very close friend somewhat detached from the conventionalisms and social codes of the

middle-class clientele for whom Germana works. It is to such a person that Germana can speak clearly freeing her discourse from the artificiality and duplicity that she needs to observe in bourgeois society. From that perspective, the narrative voice becomes more reliable since the reader knows that even Germana can trust him/her without fear of revealing the truth about the secret beginnings of her business. In this fashion, Germana's first-person confession to her friend and the reliability of such a witness serves as a justification of the girl's seemingly selfish and duplicitous behavior of not mourning her mother's death and lying to her clients. The reader is thus offered the reasons why Germana has actually acted in a fair way in spite of what is initially perceived. Such closure of poetic justice relocates the girl within a narrative in which she appears as a survivor and strong entrepreneur, instead of a heartless and dishonest woman.

At the same time, however, like Dolores in "Casi artista," Germana appears as an exceptional female worker, a female character who climbs up in the social ladder through her "extraordinary" labor, and therefore, becomes separated from the "regular" manual female laborer.

CHAPTER 3

DANGEROUS SPACES OF WORK IN THE CITY: THE STORE AND THE SHOPGIRL IN AVANT-GARDE LITERATURE

The belief in the division of space according to gender continued in full sway during the first decades of the twentieth century in Spain. Conservative sectors of Spanish society such as the Catholic Church and politicians from the right maintained their vision of women as *ángeles del hogar*, arguing that female wage work would result in the destruction of the traditional family. According to the ideology of such institutional and political powers, female labor afforded women economic independence, which, in turn, undermined men's authority in the domestic realm. From this conservative viewpoint women's work threatened to destroy "el orden jerárquico patriarcal" within the domestic realm and society (Nash 45). Moreover, female labor was thought to violate "la dignidad del marido, que se ve postergado y humillado" (Gaya qtd. in Nash 305), destroying men's sense of masculinity and worth. As late as 1936, Joan Gaya, who published several articles on the issue of female labor in the Catalan press, stated that while men's salaries sustained the family economy, women's were only used for "gastos superfluos y vanidades: vestidos que no corresponden a su condición, sombreros, maquillajes y perfumería, y muy a menudo, para fumar y contraer vicios..." (qtd. in Nash 305). Gaya's and other conservatives' demonization of female work resulted from the anxieties wrought by social and economic changes during the first quarter of the twentieth century in Spain. Indeed, "[a] partir de los años diez, y sobre todo en la década siguiente, la figura de la empleada se va haciendo familiar, al tiempo que se amplía la gama de oficios

y puestos que le son accesibles” (Capel Martínez, *Trabajo* 185). Certainly, the slow, uneven but progressive modernization of the country at this time opened up new work opportunities for women, especially in the cities.

As these women began to enter urban public spaces as workers, the first feminist movements and associations were forming. The *Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Españolas* (ANME), the *Cruzada de Mujeres Españolas* directed by Carmen de Burgos, and the *Lyceum Club Femenino*, with such prominent members as writers María Martínez Sierra, Victoria Kent, Zenobia or María Teresa León Camprubí began to advocate for women and their rights. Coupled with the industrialization of the country, feminist movements and a wider awareness of women’s emancipation emerged in Spain influenced by important victories in the fight for women’s rights and liberties in the U.S. and in other European countries. As Geraldine Scanlon points out, it was only after the First World War that the first feminist organizations appeared in Spain (196).

Nonetheless, reality proved that as in the previous century, the rising number of working women resulted not so much from a desire to consume “superfluous” commodities, as Gaya had suggested or a desire to act on their feminist beliefs but out of sheer necessity (Nash 59-60). In other words, women needed to work in order to survive. Moreover, while in the nineteenth century most working women belonged to the working-class, in the twentieth century, lower-middle class and middle-class women were also forced to enter the national labor market. Historian Mary Nash mentions some causes for such change: a greater number of women in the Spanish population, women’s longevity, a decrease in the number of marriages, and an increase of the age of marrying (42). These

combined factors in addition to the escalating costs of living, “ostaculizarán sustancialmente la realización de la habitual ‘carrera’ de la mujer—el matrimonio—y, la obligarán a buscar su sustento fuera del hogar” (49). Under such circumstances and despite conservative voices, the entrance of many working-class and middle-class women in the labor market in Spain’s urban areas proved to be unstoppable.

The industrialization of Spain was rapidly transforming the social and geographical landscape of the cities, providing new spaces for women to develop identities that differed from nineteenth-century ideals of womanhood. Women’s presence in cinemas, department stores, universities and female clubs continued to break down the traditional divide between public and private spaces. As workers and/or as consumers, women at this time experienced greater mobility than earlier female generations. And this mobility, without any doubt, became a great source of anxiety for many at a time when the spectacularization and commodification brought about by modernity had strong gender connotations. As Gaya suggested, women who were free to move about in the urban space without adequate supervision ran the risk of overspending their wages and falling into prostitution. For Gaya and other traditionalists, women were driven by new forms of mass-culture—mass-produced literature, cinema, and modern retailing—to aspire to a higher social status by purchasing certain commodities that their meager salaries could not afford. Thus, urban female workers were considered “highly susceptible to promiscuity and ultimately prostitution, because their appetites for luxury, once awakened by their proximity to an alluring profusion of material goods, could only be satisfied by selling their bodies for financial gain” (Felski, *Gender of Modernity* 72).

Female workers were construed as being sexually loose and prone to prostitution, especially because the modern city offered them a kind of anonymity and leisure spaces where they came in direct contact with men. Ultimately, like all subjects under capitalism women who left the domestic realm to work, relax and consume goods in public spaces were perceived as potential commodities, victims of the capitalist market economy that prevailed in modern society.

One of the urban female figures that aroused the most social anxiety during these years was the shopgirl. Modern shopgirls, as working women with a certain amount of economic independence, occupied public spaces of leisure and work “demonstrating the instability of the notion of ‘separation spheres,’ divided by gender into public and private realms, and the effects of transformation wrought by modernity on the lives of working women” (Shapiro 2). Furthermore, placed at the intersection of waged work and consumption, shopgirls both in the U.S. and in Europe embodied middle-class anxieties about the commodification of working women whose jobs dangerously blurred the distinction between seller, consumer and commodity. As Shelley Stamp has claimed, shopgirls “occupied a unique position in the world of women’s work, comparable neither to factory laborers nor domestics, nor even clerical workers, since their workplace was also a public venue in which there was likely to be more confusion between their roles as workers and their aspirations as consumers” (152). In the same vein, Rita Felski highlights how “journal articles depicted female shop employees as particularly endangered [by the draw of prostitution], given their constant exposure to middle-class lifestyles and their ambiguous class status, which helped to encourage envy and dissatisfaction” (*Gender of*

Modernity 72). This middle-class perception of shopgirls was closely associated with the nineteenth-century belief that women's consumption of mass-produced culture incited a desire for unattainable luxury. In particular, shopgirls embodied "the 'problem' of young female earners, often raising questions about desires unleashed by commercial recreation culture and consumer economy" (Stamp 142). Furthermore, "shopgirls were . . . perceived by middle-class observers as consumers of goods and leisure products bound up in the fantasies produced by popular culture, particularly fantasies tied to the genre of the romance" (Shapiro 1). Thus, reading serialized novels or watching films at the cinema was seen as a dangerous practice for these over-desiring women.

However, if the bourgeois notion of shopgirls' desire for commodities constructed them as avid consumers risking their sexual decency, their own "display" at the store simultaneously positioned them as commodities in the middle-class imagination. Indeed, the shopgirl was a mediator "for the desires of consumers on the other side of the counter, be they women who longed to purchase the goods on display or men who might desire the shopgirl herself as another type of merchandise" (Shapiro 1). The visual nature of retailing, especially in its most modern manifestation, aimed to capture and please customers' gazes with different visual pleasures that ranged from the exotic display of commodities, the architectural design of the store, to the display of well-dressed, compliant, and smiling shop assistants.

As early as 1841, *costumbrista* writer and journalist Mesonero Romanos had already observed the connection between spectacle, desire and consumption in modern Parisian stores: "¿Qué no inventan el capricho y el interés combinados para atraer por un

instante la fugaz vista del pasajero, para despertar en él deseos que de otro modo no le hubieran ocurrido jamás!” (110). Consumer experience was turned into “spectacle and exhibition” in which the value of the product itself depended on the ideas associated with the place where it was sold (Crossik and Jaumain 27). Similarly, Mesonero Romanos does not overlook the role of shopgirls as part of the spectacularization and commodification of desire in the Parisian stores:

Añádase a este brillante primor de las tiendas, que detrás de aquellas cristalerías y por entre los ligeros espacios que permiten tan variados objetos, a la luz de cien mecheros de gas, reflejados en cien espejos que cubren las paredes y estanterías, sentadas en elegantes sillones o paseando detrás de los inmensos mostradores, *os está acechando* una falange de seductoras sirenas (estilo antiguo), o ya sea hasta una docena de mujeres fatales (estilo moderno). (113 emphasis added)

Like other middle-class male observers of the time, Mesonero Romanos noted the confluence of sexual desire and consumption in the shopgirl’s body. As an extension of the magnificent objects and the luxurious decoration of the store in which desire is multiplied by a profusion of mirrors, shop assistants emerge as sexually alluring women who lie in wait for the male client. From the perspective of the male consumer, the shopgirl exists to attract the gaze of the male shopper. Furthermore, shopgirls do so in groups, appearing as a kind of harem of women wanting to sexually satisfy the male client. Mesonero Romanos’ description of these “alluring sirens” or “femmes fatales” tells more about the male sexual fantasies of his own social class than about the actual life and

labor conditions of the women working at the store.

In fact, the shop and the department store were also dangerous spaces for women to work precisely due to their configuration as easily accessible sexual commodities by male middle-class fantasy. Thus, as part of their work and to keep their jobs, shopgirls had to endure male clients' unwanted sexual approaches in addition to similar types of harassment from male employees or bosses. Mesonero Romanos himself notices this in his observations: "Y en medio de esta actividad, a la vista de sus jefes, siendo siempre objeto de las expresivas miradas de los *flâneurs* parados delante de los cristales, sostienen sin interrupción el diálogo con el recalcitrante comprador, y aún saben conservar una sangre fría, que desconcierta a los temerarios y seduce a los indiferentes" (117). Female shop assistants had to remain passive before the *flâneur*'s penetrating and sexualizing gaze.

The actual testimony of a shopgirl in New Jersey, although from another geographical location, is representative of the sexual harassment that some Spanish shopgirls might have faced at work. Written in 1907, a letter to the editor of the newspaper "Forverts" by "Shopgirl" narrates the abuse and sexual coercion inflicted by the store foreman. After having rejected his sexual approaches, she writes: "I am left without a job. Can you imagine my circumstances and that of my parents who depend on my earnings?" (301). Obviously, shopgirls' rejection of their employers' sexual advances had dramatic consequences for women who were the only breadwinners of the family.

Historian Rosa María Capel Martínez describes how after 1910 a campaign appeared in the Spanish press in favor of middle-class female labor in particular trades. Its

proponents claimed that those jobs involved in the retailing of female products such as cosmetics, clothing, or lingerie should be reserved for women (*Trabajo* 186). However, the underlying motives of this campaign were problematic. According to the Spanish historian, “a las empleadas se les puede exigir mayor esfuerzo, con jornadas de doce a catorce horas y sólo noventa minutos de descanso al mediodía para comer, y se les retribuye mucho menos [que a los hombres]: 2-3 pesetas diarias en 1913” (186). In addition, even though shop assistants earned more money than maids or industrial workers, their wages were not enough to make ends meet (Capel Martínez, *Trabajo* 186). Economically speaking, working as a shopgirl did not offer women an adequate salary.

While *fin de siècle* authors such as Emile Zola and George Gissing had already portrayed the shopgirl in *Au bonheur des dames* (1883) and *The Odd Women* (1893) respectively, Spanish writers would not do so until the early twentieth century. The appearance of the shopgirl as an urban worker and as a cultural construction in Spain coincides with the modernization of the country and the emergence of new cultural trends in early twenty-century Europe. Modernism,⁸ overlapping and followed by avant-garde cultural movements such as surrealism, futurism, and Dadaism aimed to overcome the aesthetic and ideological principles of the realist tradition through artistic experimentation.

Certainly, as Pumphrey suggests,

[a]ny adequate reading of the modern period . . . must take account of the fact that the debates over women’s public freedom, over fashion and

⁸ In Spain in particular, modernist writers such as Pío Baroja, Unamuno, Antonio Machado or Valle-Inclán used aesthetic experimentation and renovation to articulate their preoccupation for the nation’s decadence and regeneration (Kirkpatrick 18).

femininity, cosmetics and home cleaning were as essential to the fabrication of modernity as cubism, Dada or futurism, as symbolism, fragmented form or the stream-of-consciousness narrative. (Pumphrey qtd. in Felski, *Gender of Modernity* 28).

Furthermore, to grasp the full complexities of this time period requires a much better understanding of the connection between working women, their cultural construction, and the new experimental artistic trends taking place at this time. Indeed, be it as a modernist or avant-garde female artist such as Carmen de Burgos, Concha Espina, or Maruja Mayo or as a fictional character in the work of a female or male artist, the figure of the working woman embodied a new type of femininity that raised the desires and anxieties of a society caught between tradition and modernity. Such is the case of the female protagonists of Carmen de Burgos' novel *La rampa* (1917) and avant-garde artist Ramón Gómez de la Serna *La nardo* (1930). Although from different aesthetic and ideological perspectives, both novels configure the salesgirl's workplace as a dangerous space in the urban landscape of modern Madrid.

3.1. Mapping the Working Female Body in the City: Carmen de Burgos' *La rampa* (1917)

. . . hay seres más desgraciados que el obrero, la mujer y la hija de éste, y hay todavía mujeres más desamparadas que las obreras: la viudedad y la huérfana de las clases medias trabajadoras.

Alejandro San Martín

Empleadas españolas; mecanógrafas, tenedoras de libros, cajeras, dependientas, todas vosotras: tan humildes en vuestro pobre traje de señoritas venidas a menos, tan anémicas y tan fieles y tan valientes, tan íntegras, sin siquiera el consuelo de los alegres noviazgos modisteriles; demasiado altas y demasiado empequeñecidas, sois la más pura y la más desconsoladora representación de la condición social de la mujer en España

Margarita Nelken

The personal and professional life of Carmen de Burgos Seguí (1867-1932) transgressed both the gender and social conventions of her day. In the early twentieth century, both her private and public behavior was out of place. Like Emilia Pardo Bazán, De Burgos separated from her husband and moved to Madrid with her daughter in 1901. Seven years later de Burgos entered into a love affair with avant-garde writer Ramón Gómez de la Serna—twenty years her junior—which lasted for two decades. During this time, the couple lived together without marrying and maintained “one of the most modern, productive relationships in Spanish literary history” (Davis 120).

De Burgos’ sense of independence and intellectual curiosity allowed her to be economically independent. In addition to securing a stable salary as a teacher, she also worked as a journalist. In fact, she was a fiction writer and the first female newspaper reporter in Spain, activities which substantially improved her standard of life in the later years of her career. As Catherine Davis suggests, de Burgos’ choice to live in Madrid was “a wise decision. The capital was the centre of the national publishing industry and its urban anonymity allowed her to live a relatively normal life free from the scandal she had experienced as a single mother in provincial towns” (119). Especially after “[h]er husband’s convenient death in 1906 [de Burgos] improved her standing: a widow was independent and respected, a separated woman was not” (Davis 120).

De Burgos’ unconventional personal life ran parallel to her literary and political career, for both were unusual for a woman of that time. As Maryellen Bieder has suggested, “Burgos made her dramatic break with the circumspection of earlier Spanish

women through her use of the print medium. By launching surveys on attitudes toward such controversial issues as divorce and women's suffrage, she created a public debate in the press" ("Carmen de Burgos" 248). Indeed, as a versatile writer, de Burgos articulated her progressive agenda in both her fictional and non-fictional work; public lectures, newspaper articles, surveys, essays, novels, and short stories comprise some of the genres and formats of her production through which she gave voice to the pressing social issues that the new century engendered in Spain. However, in spite of her highly productive literary activity, active intellectual life, and wide readership, Carmen de Burgos has been excluded from the literary canon until recently. Along with other authors whose work had a strong progressive political affiliation, de Burgos practically disappeared as a literary and intellectual referent in the cultural realm of the Franco era. Moreover, her support of the feminist cause was not well received in the Fascist political regime that reimagined and relocated women within the domestic sphere, thereby stifling the new freedoms and rights that women had acquired during the Second Republic. Nevertheless, her hitherto absence from the Spanish literary canon has been due not only to ideological reasons but also to aesthetic considerations, as different critics have proposed.

One of the main reasons why de Burgos has been excluded from the Spanish literary canon is that her work differs from the aesthetic and ideological precepts of modernism or the avant-garde, a literary movement characterized by an almost exclusively male membership (Ugarte, 56; Johnson, "Women Novelsists" 41; Bieder, "Carmen de Burgos" 251). For Bieder, "[t]he scant appreciation accorded Burgos' fiction by literary

critics before the 1970s derives in part from the author's reliance on the realist mode and on everyday language in an era of literary modernism and vanguard experimentation" ("Carmen de Burgos" 251). Indeed, as Johnson contends, "Literary modernism emphasized form and philosophy over social phenomena such as women's shifting roles in the modern world" ("Carmen de Burgos" 66). The use of linguistic turns, irony often detached from social critique, abstract symbolism, philosophical themes, and abstruse language, for instance, represent some of the techniques that de Burgos' male contemporaries were employing in their artistic creations. On the other hand, de Burgos and other female writers of the time did not share the same creative motivations and interests of their male counterparts or at least to the same extent. For many of de Burgos' female contemporaries such as Margarita Nelken, Rosa Chacel, or Federica Montseny, aesthetics was intimately connected with their political struggle to define a new type of femininity that did not fit the erotic or ideal womanhood imagined by both male authors and patriarchal society. Johnson states that "In many ways the avant-garde is about women, but without women" since male vanguard artists had an "[o]bsession with female corporeality [which was] central to much canonized vanguard art and often provide[d] the basis for its shock value" ("Women Novelists" 41). In their work, female vanguard novelists

[r]ather than erotic fantasies, [imagined women as] socially and politically committed new women, who do not yet exist in Spain, but who are projected for the future. These women, like the male vanguard writers' protagonists, dream; they have a vision, not of the female body, but of a

new body politic, of a different Spanish society in which women act alongside men.” (Johnson, “Carmen de Burgos” 42)

In this sense, Carmen de Burgos’ preoccupation with women’s issues occupies a central position in her literary output “displac[ing] the more abstract concerns of male authors” (Bieder “Carmen de Burgos” 252). From the surveys that she initiated on topics such as divorce or women’s suffrage, to short stories dealing with topics such as domestic violence, homosexuality, or the vulnerability of women under a misogynist law, de Burgos “champion[ed] women’s right to education, to work, and to equal protection under the law” (Bieder “Carmen de Burgos” 256). Like her feminist predecessor Pardo Bazán, de Burgos firmly believed that the only way women could attain psychological and physical autonomy was by earning their own salaries and thus, in order to become economically independent of the men of the family. For Susan Larson, “[g]ran parte del feminismo [y de la modernidad] de de Burgos se basa en la creencia de la necesidad de posibilitar a la mujer española el acceso al trabajo fuera de casa como primer paso hacia la independencia, una lección que nos enseña la forma de vida de esta mujer tan revolucionaria y moderna” (ix).

In one of her most outstanding non-fictional works on such issues, her collection of essays *La mujer moderna y sus derechos* (1927), Carmen de Burgos devotes one chapter to women’s right to work. In the chapter entitled “Derecho al trabajo” the author advocates equal work rights for women and men. Criticizing the legal regulation and protection of women’s labor conditions that were preventing women from receiving a high salary, de Burgos asks for equal opportunity for both male and female laborers and the

same salary for the same work. De Burgos argues that relegating women to jobs that the law saw as appropriate for women kept them in lower salary positions; in the household, a woman's salary was only supplemental to the family finance and sometimes even expendable, rarely if ever considered the main and only source of household income:

No se comprende por qué la mujer vive en condiciones de mayor baratura.

Para ella la vida es tan costosa como para el hombre. Si es jefe de familia y tiene a su cargo padres, hermanos, hijos, y a veces hasta el propio marido, no le cuesta menos el mantenerlos que le costaría a cualquier hombre en su lugar. (Burgos , *La mujer* 104)

Similarly, de Burgos criticizes those who allege that women should only perform certain types of jobs and avoid professions deemed unfeminine. In her opinion, the jobs that women are not allowed to perform are not “los más nocivos, sino los que excitan los celos y la compentecia [de los hombres]” (*La mujer* 111). Cigarmakers, laundresses, flowermakers, and so on, although often seen as innocuous jobs in the social imaginary, also entail certain dangers when they are performed, which are conveniently ignored by men. For her, it is not just bourgeois men who are restricting women's work, but also working-class men urging women back to the domestic realm and arguing that women in the workforce has caused wage reductions for all. De Burgos disagrees and states that “[p]recisamente el obrero necesita apoyarse en sus compañeras de infortunio; las vindicaciones de la mujer y el proletariado marchan unidas” (*La mujer* 107). From her viewpoint, the actual cause of the reduction of wages is in fact the existence of “obreras vergonzantes,” the “arañas” and philanthropic institutions that promote the “jornal de

sangre” (*La mujer* 100) —which literally translates into “blood wages”— or the sweating system. In this manner, home and institutionally based female workers are made to work long hours in exchange for very low wages, becoming an unbeatable source of competition for the rest of male and female workers.

Interestingly, de Burgos’ denunciation of women’s exploitation as cheap workers as it appears in her essays is still echoed in current feminist circles, which speaks volumes about the author’s modernity and advanced feminist philosophy. Indeed, de Burgos’ claims can be summarized by Cynthia Enloe who, referring to current international politics, asserts that patriarchal assumptions render women’s labor cheap at the international level: women’s jobs are naturally feminine, and therefore, these jobs are performed without learned skills; skilled jobs, which supposedly involve physical strength, are reserved for men; women’s income is secondary in the family economy, since men are the breadwinners and women’s main mission is to be mothers and wives; and finally, female work is kept cheap by preventing women from unionizing since their involvement in political activity contravenes female decency (162-6).

Unlike male modernist writers, de Burgos gave literary representation to female work in her fiction in order to draw attention to society’s need to provide job opportunities for women. In her novels, short stories, and novellas, the author “frequently foregrounds a woman protagonist confronted by adverse social, monetary, and personal conditions or at a defining moment in her relations with men” (Bieder, “Carmen de Burgos” 252). For de Burgos, remunerated work not only allows women to be self-sufficient but it also allows them to make wise decisions about their own bodies

and lives. If modernist writers conceived of the female body to express their own erotic fantasies and desires, de Burgos envisioned the female body as a working body, a physical body bearing the material realities of a marginal life. For instance, in “El veneno del arte” (1910), the author portrays the modern attitude of a female singer who prefers her economic independence and unrestricted movement to the domestic routine of most Spanish women. The seamstress Elisa, the main character in de Burgos’ short novel “La Flor de la Playa” (1920), sets off on a honeymoon-like rendezvous with her boyfriend only to realize that she does not want to marry him and instead chooses to continue working. Finally, a female politician and explorer with great capacity for self-invention as a professional woman is the main character in the short novel “La entrometida” (1921).

However, among all of her works, it is her novel *La rampa* (1917) that is most fully invested in the description and representation of female labor. In this novel, de Burgos portrays female working bodies in constant transformation—struggling to survive and find their place in the inhospitable space of a modernizing city. Elizabeth Grosz has argued that “the city is made and made over into the simulacrum of the body, and the body, in its turn, is transformed, ‘citified’, urbanized as a distinctively metropolitan body” (242). Indeed, in de Burgos’ novel, the female body at work is not “a fixed entity but is instead seen as having a plasticity or malleability which means that it can take different forms and shapes at different times, and so also have a geography” (McDowell 39). To fully understand de Burgos’ representation of women’s bodies in her novel, we must consider the metaphorical and literal places where the author positioned those bodies. The city, as the novel’s central location of women’s working bodies, is a space

architecturally configured in response to a bourgeois sociopolitical regime that positioned female bodies most often in private spaces. There is no doubt that actual women were part of what Marion Young has termed the “scaling bodies” brought about by the workings of cultural imperialism (128). By such “scaling,” bodies were classified and assigned a particular social status according to their attributes by a dominant male bourgeois perspective (Young 128). Therefore, “In much of nineteenth-century scientific [and social] discourse . . . whole groups of people are essentially and irrevocably degenerate: Blacks, Jews, homosexuals, poor, working people, and women” (Young 128-9).

It is not strange that in the city, whose “external and internal design and layout . . . symbolize male power and authority and men’s legitimate occupation of these spaces[,] feminine bodies are ‘out of place’” (McDowell 145). Urban working women’s bodies were then characterized by a contradiction: on the one hand, they were rendered inappropriate within the domestic and the public space of the city. In the public, as previously discussed, female workers were considered moral deviants. In the domestic, they were seen as incompetent mothers whose jobs prevented them from properly attending to their children and husband. On the other hand, the daily toil and economic productivity of female bodies at work in the city were deemed invisible to the benefit of a capitalist system based on cheap labor. As Miles et al. suggest, “in the minds of architects, planners and the state . . . the everyday of the city is often hidden away” (26).

However, de Burgos’ *La rampa* brings to the fore the fissures and contradictions that emerge in the confrontation between the city imagined and desired by the male

bourgeoisie, which “iba a ofrecer a todos más acceso a los frutos de la industrialización” (Larson xvii) and the daily experiences of the bodies of urban working women. As Susan Larson has put it, “*La rampa* niega rotundamente el discurso liberador sobre la modernidad que estaba tan en boga en los círculos de intelectuales de la época al nivel local y nacional” (xvii). In fact, two clearly distinct cities coexist in the narrative: the male dominated city of economic and social control and the marginal and invisible city of female labor on which the former depends.

La rampa narrates the literal and metaphorical trajectory of an impoverished middle-class girl, Isabel, in early twentieth-century Madrid. Isabel, although born and raised in a wealthy family, falls into poverty after her father’s death and her mother’s over-expenditure. Confined to the domestic realm as a proper bourgeois woman in her early years, Isabel is soon forced to occupy the public space in search of a job to support herself. Thanks to one of her father’s old acquaintances, Don Prudencio, Isabel starts working at a department store in Madrid’s city center. An unwanted pregnancy out of wedlock will further push her into a downward spiral, losing her job and continuing a journey into the marginal spaces of the city, which eventually will lead to her final downfall. Interestingly, her story runs parallel to Águeda’s, a working-class girl who is also employed at the department store and becomes Isabel’s best friend. In the narrative, Águeda’s trajectory, however, reveals how class origins determine a working woman’s trajectory, bringing to the fore the narrator’s diverging and stereotyped understanding of middle-class and working-class female labor.

Isabel is described as “[la] hija de un comisionista, que había rodeado su vida de

ese bienestar con rachas intermitentes de apuros, de lujo y hasta de esplendidez propia de la gente de negocios” (15). Spoiled and ignorant of financial matters, both Isabel and her mother find themselves in a precarious economic situation after her father’s death since “su única preocupación fue continuar sosteniendo la casa con el mismo rango” (15). As already seen in previous chapters, the middle-class was strongly invested in projecting a public image of high social and economic status in order to remain in circulation in their society. Isabel and her mother, in an attempt to keep up with appearances and with “la inconsciencia de las mujeres que no están habituadas a manejar capitales ni a conocer el valor del dinero” (15), spend all that Isabel’s father left after his death. The mother’s long illness and final death contributes to Isabel’s expenses and overall anxiety about her economic situation. Poverty and shame pervade her life: “Junto con las privaciones de la miseria había sufrido el dolor de sentirse humillada al sentirse pobre. Era como si descendiese de rango, como si se inferiorizase respecto a las que habían sido sus amigas” (16).

Overwhelmed by her situation, Isabel enters a new realm of consciousness that allows her to see what she had disregarded while being wealthy: an invisible world of female working bodies whose toil and labor sustain middle-class homes. In distress, Isabel sympathizes with all the middle-class and working-class women who worked for her own middle-class family:

Recordaba ahora a su pobre profesora de piano, . . . como un pájaro viejo, despintado, desplumado, . . . ansiosa de cumplir bien para ganar su mensualidad. . .

Recordaba también la miseria de todas aquellas mujeres que la rodeaban en los tiempos de esplendor de su casa, y en las que apenas había reparado: la que les llevaba el jabón, fabricado por ella, y que a fuerza de trabajar día y noche, ganaba una peseta para mantener a cinco hijos. Aquella otra mujer que les llevaba la carne más barata, arriesgándose a pasarla de contrabando a fin de que le quedasen unos céntimos; y la otra, la cigarrera, casi ciega, que iba todos los domingos a hacerle una rueda de cigarrillos a su padre. . . .

Pasaban por su imaginación las pobres criadas, . . . [e]specie de animalillos domésticos que viven en la familia sin entrar en ella jamás. . . .

La lavandera . . . con su pecho enfermo iba todos los días a la orilla del río para inclinarse sobre la piedra y golpear y chapotear en aquella agua fría que profundizaba en las grietas de sus manos y las hacía sangrar.

[A]quella jovencita planchadora que murió en el hospital; y aquella otra, hija de la costurera, que se enfermó liando caramelos con papel de plomo dentro de la cueva inmunda en los bajos de la confitería de un gran industrial. (16-7)

Here, Isabel's detailed recollection of different working women's physical labor is also a narrative strategy to make the reader see the painful and ignored realities of Spanish female labor, which "[p]arecía que a pesar de saberlo todos, nadie conocía sus conflictos" (18). Her memories not only undermine the middle-class ideal of the home as a space of joyful rest, but also show how capitalism—"gran industrial"—depends on cheap female labor without providing adequate working conditions.

Interestingly, Isabel's declassing is represented by the physical—and violent—downward descent of her body from an imagined balcony: “Se sentía lanzada entre las mujeres que luchan; pero más indefensa que ellas, como si la hubiesen arrojado por un balcón y al caer se hubiese roto las piernas y los brazos” (16). From the comfort and security of the bourgeois domestic sphere, represented by the balcony, Isabel has been thrown into the public realm to become part of the women who have to work to survive. However, she is at a disadvantage when compared to the other working women as the representation of her immobile and maimed body as a result of the fall shows: her broken arms and legs are a trope for the lack of knowledge and experience that most working-class women possess to perform their jobs and to navigate the physical and social map of the city.

Unfortunately, most places where Isabel seeks work reject her because “[p]or modesta que quería ir su aspecto, sus manos cuidadas, su porte todo denunciaba que no era una obrera ni una sirvienta. [Isabel era] demasiada señorita” (21). Potential employers, when seeing her, codify her body as inadequate for the work she would need to do: her body stands for a social marker of a class to which she no longer belongs, positioning her in the limbo of society: Isabel thus does not have a proper place in her society anymore. In spite of its middle-class appearance, Isabel's body has been drawn into “[el] espectáculo de la ciudad llena de mujeres desamparadas” (18), and her body is now public in two interconnected ways: declassed and expelled from the domestic realm, her body is meant to both inhabit and be seen in the public spaces of the city. In the book *Visualizing Spanish Modernity*, Susan Larson and Eva Woods demonstrate how eighteenth-century

modernity fostered the use of technologies of vision as tools for controlling bodies and knowledge in Western societies (7). Thus, and since “[i]t is impossible to talk about bodies without talking about space” (Longhurst 93). It does not come as a surprise that in early twentieth-century Madrid, when modernization was at its height, the visualization of Isabel’s body in public spaces becomes consumed and commodified. Trapped in the midst of urban production and consumption, her “laboring body also becomes mechanized, measurable and thus exchangeable” as a commodity (Larson and Woods 7).

One of the spaces in which Isabel’s body is transformed into both a source of labor exploitation and a visual commodity is in the department store where Isabel finds a job as a shop girl. Her new job, in fact, affords her decent wages that allow her to “vivir hasta con apariencias de señorita y cierto decoro, sin estar sujeta a un trabajo demasiado penoso” (30). Nonetheless, even though her wages are apparently sufficient and her job is not terribly harsh, Isabel is constituted as an exploited worker in the narrative. The long working hours—from eight in the morning to nine at night with a two-hour break—seem endless due to the fact that she cannot sit and rest for long stretches of time: “Pasaban todo el día de pie, vigilado el espacio encomendado a su custodia, sin poder hacer uso de la silla que en cumplimiento de la ley de protección a la mujer había puesto los dueños a disposición de cada una de las empleadas” (36). The “Ley de la silla” or the law of the chair, issued on February 27, 1912, was created to prevent the physical problems associated with standing for long hours that female workers at stores had to endure: varicose veins, muscular cramps, exhaustion, etc. As the narration shows—“fatigadas, sintiendo la molestia de la hinchazón de sus piernas a fuerza de no poderse sentar” (94)—

this law was not fully implemented because the seated shop assistants could damage the image that stores aimed to project. Reports from that time in England, which can be usefully applied to the Spanish case, show that “the evil of confinement for long hours is aggravated by the rule in force in some establishments that the assistants must not lean against the walls or on the counter, even when they have no customers to serve”

(Hallsworth and Davis qtd. in Shapiro 33).

It is no surprise then that at the department store, Isabel and her friend Águeda avoid talking to each other because such thing “hubiera desagradado a don Prudencio [al] ver a las empleadas entretenidas” (30). From a patriarchal perspective, talking too much was—and still is—considered an innate weakness in women, especially in women from the lower classes. The Spanish language and social imaginary represent such traditional stereotypes in which women are compared to objects and animals and whose vice of excessive talking renders them unmarriageable; women must remain silent in the presence of the embodiment of the word of reason and authority: the male figure (Fernández Poncela 38-9). “La mujer y el horno por la boca se calientan,” “Por ese hablar tan suelto, habrás de perder casamiento,” and “Donde hay barbas, callen faldas” are just some examples of how women were expected to keep their “lovely mouths gagged with pollen,” as Cixous would poetically describe it (349).

Because the supposed female tendency to speak excessively was seen as a vice in the dominant male view, it is not rare to find cases in which women as a whole were perceived as totally inadequate in the workplace. For instance, in a study completed at the end of the nineteenth century on female Spanish workers, it is said that one of the

reasons why women used to get lower salaries than men performing the same jobs is “[s]u costumbre de cantar y hablar, que perjudica notablemente la cantidad de trabajo” (Nash 331). According to such perspective, women’s habit of singing and talking at work translates into the waste of productive labor time, decreasing the employer’s economic benefits.

Shopgirls’ bodies were strictly disciplined in the workplace to comply with the aesthetic goals that the modern organization of retailing, strongly invested in visual appearances, required. As Lise Shapiro argues, “[i]n this setting, working women came to be figured as laborers within an economy of embodiment and self-display, fixtures in the phantasmagoria of the store and symbols of the increasing centrality of commodity goods and consumer desire to turn-of-the-century [European] culture (55). Therefore, it is necessary that Isabel and other female shop-assistants’ stance, looks, voice, clothes, hairstyle, make-up, hands, etc. blend with and become part of the gamut of attractive visual commodities exhibited at the store:

Muchos les miraban como si ellas también fuesen objetos expuestos a la venta en el Bazar y fáciles de comprar. No podían rechazarlos más que con una gravedad dulce, para no perjudicar los intereses del establecimiento.

Estaban obligadas a ser, en cierto modo, las amantes del público, al que era preciso sonreír y agradar. (31)

Isabel and her female co-workers’ commodified bodies are offered to consumers “as sexualized recipients of male desire and as mediators for female consumers’ fantasies and indentificatory pleasures” (Shapiro 55).

However, although transformed into a sexual commodity, Isabel is also caught within the narrative of female decency and respectability, which requires the “proper” adornment and behavior of her body at work. Thus, when Isabel falls in love with Fernando, she buys new dresses, shoes, make-up, and wears an elaborate hairstyle. She spends so much time styling her hair early in the morning that she is late for work, angering Don Prudencio:

Estas coqueterías hacen perder el tiempo, y no son propias de las mujeres que trabajan. Luego hablan de las mujeres inglesas y se quieren comparar con ellas. ¡Aquello son mujeres! Con naturalidad; parecen hombres, con toda su seriedad. Ustedes no pueden vivir sin el tocador, sin los polvos, sin los pelitos rizados..., y luego, ¡claro! El público se propasa, no las toma por personas decentes... Todas parecen cupletistas..., y yo no lo he de consentir. (52)

Physical adornment on females signifies promiscuity, according to the department store owner. Similarly, Don Prudencio also aims to regulate and discipline Isabel’s body, disapproving of her excessive femininity and showing her what a normalized female body is: the masculinized body of English women. His patronizing statement reveals the contradictory and competing discourses that attempt to define and position Isabel’s working body. On the one hand, she has to be freed of any artificiality in her demeanor and appearance: she has to become “masculine” to be a better worker because the artificiality of the (Spanish) feminine adornment only diminishes her productivity and arouses male clients’ desires. On the other, Isabel’s efficient work performance requires

her to be “fake” and pleasing with clients to fulfill their scopophilic desires all the while enduring their sexual approaches and vulgar comments. If the department store is “a spectacle which would endow the goods, by association, with an interest the merchandise might intrinsically lack” (Crossick and Jaumain 27), and shopgirls are part of the merchandise exhibited “connot[ing] to-be-look-at-ness” (Mulvey 62), female employers then become signifiers whose meaning is provided by male desire. At the same time, while such masquerade pleases the male gaze, it also emphasizes the constructed nature of the feminine that Isabel has to perform, thereby revealing that “[w]omanliness is a mask which can be worn or removed” (Doane 502).

For the narrative voice, the male gaze does not know how to look and is described as a superficial gaze that only aims to fulfill its own egotistic desire: “Los hombres no sabían mirarlas a los ojos. En toda mirada de mujer encontraban únicamente el encanto de su sexo. Nada más” (31). The department store becomes a reproduction of the city in which female labor remains invisible and marginal: “los transeúntes del Bazar, especie de transeúntes de las calles con escaparates, pasaban y repasaban ante los objetos. Unas veces había que guiarlos a una sección que no encontraba; otras, ayudarles en sus buscas, darles consejos para decidirse a elegir, y, por último, . . . , era preciso ir detrás de ellos llevándoles las compras” (31). Furthermore, the narrative voice associates the department store with the museum, another space of modernity in which the visual played a primary role: “Era muy lenta la procesión de todos, y tenía algo de visita al Museo el día de fiesta” (94).

While for most customers the department store is a space of enjoyment and

pleasure, the narrative voice portrays these working women as subjects who define the department store as a space of hard labor. The narrative voice also shows that shopgirls have needs and emotions, subverting the masculinist scopophilic gaze that ignores female productivity and labor: “Sentirían un gran respecto y una gran pesar si en vez de mirarles los ojos superficialmente y de recoger lo de superficial que hay en ellos, miraran bien esos ojos dulces y heridos, ojos de condenadas a un sino triste” (31). Thus, the novel “complicate[s] the description of the department store as a sphere of feminine pleasure, making the scene of consumer desire into one of sexual and social risk” (Shapiro 55).

In fact, one of the issues that worries Isabel is precisely another type of invisibility or absence that she fears will condition her job in the future at the department store: there are no old women employees because, as the narrative voice puts it, old female bodies are forced to inhabit “el fondo de la ciudad” (30), the marginal spaces of the city concealed from the social imaginary. Thus, without the exchange value that female youth and beauty confer on women in patriarchal society, old female bodies are left to “el abandono sordo y lento en que se las dejaba” (30) not only in the store, but also in the city streets. Isabel realizes that unproductive working-class or destitute middle-class old women in the city are doomed to die in solitude and poverty.

In the novel, the department store is also configured as a space of social control of the body implemented by mechanisms of discipline and surveillance. As Foucault describes in his work, the implementation of power in the new “disciplinary society” during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was put into practice by “the daily exercise of surveillance, in a panopticism [based on] the vigilance of intersecting gazes” (Foucault,

Discipline and Punish 217). Such regulation and discipline aimed “to extract from bodies the maximum time and force” (*Discipline and Punish* 220), which constituted “an indispensable element in the development of capitalism” (*History of Sexuality* 141). Indeed, at the department store where Isabel works, a network of power relations based on “intersecting gazes” controls working and consuming bodies. Don Prudencio, as the business owner, is presented as the authority who closely watches his employees’ behavior at the store: “rodaba entre las vitrinas casi oculto por las gentes que circulaban por allí, . . . atento a vigilar el comportamiento de los empleados” (94). His body functions as a moving surveillance device that inspects and controls the labor performed by the store employees. Employers, without being sure that he is watching, have already internalized his presence and therefore rely on to self-surveillance. That explains why Isabel and Águeda do not dare to talk to each other at work even though they do not know whether Don Prudencio is watching them or not.

Surveillance and discipline also take place among the employees themselves. Except for the friendship between Águeda and Isabel, social relations among the department store workers are based on distrust and envy. Thus, Isabel has to regulate her body’s appearance at work because “Tenía un gran miedo a que las compañeras le conociesen el blancor que los albayaldes prestaban a su cutis y el rosado tenue que le comunicaba la bola ligeramente impregnada de carmín” (55). For the narrative voice, the lack of solidarity among shopgirls is due to the competition within their own sex at all levels of their existence: “el enemigo de la mujer que trabaja era la mujer misma” (32). However, it is possible to find an alternative explanation for such competitive behavior

based on economic reasons, especially when considering that it is not just female workmates who distrust Isabel but also her male coworkers. According to Crossick and Jaumain, the use of commissions was a common practice in department stores at the turn of the century: “The most widespread was the commission paid to sales staff, often on the value of each sale, and which generally constituted the majority of an assistant’s earnings” (18). While this system encouraged workers to sell as much as they could, it also fostered competition among the staff (Crossick and Jaumain 18). Consequently, this type of incentive at the workplace could have been another source of the tension between Isabel and her coworkers although it is not explicitly shown as such in the narrative.

A different type of surveillance mechanism aimed at fostering consumption and increasing profitability is the one performed by shopgirls on clients at the department store. Shopgirls at Don Prudencio’s department store have to “vigila[r] el espacio encomendado a su custodia” and “espíar” on the clients (30-1). Isabel has to deduce what clients desire by watching and monitoring their movements and gestures without the latter’s awareness. By inferring customers’ desires and needs, employers have the power to direct such desire towards the act of purchasing: helping them find what they are looking for, giving them advice to choose certain products, or carrying their purchases to the cashier are techniques that encourage buying.

Thus, the department store, conceived of as a modern space of economic production, resorts to techniques of surveillance and discipline to obtain maximum profits. Yet, against such discourses focused on profitability and consumption, the friendship between Isabel and Águeda also reconfigures the department store as a site

where counterdiscourses can emerge. For instance, when their male clients' superficial gazes objectify their bodies, the girls' glances at each other serve to relocate their bodies as subjects: "La falta de comprensión que hallaban en todos les hacía refugiarse la una en la otra; se miraban poniendo en sus ojos una muda queja o una protesta que aliviaba su pesar" (31). From their position of marginality in the department store and, by extension, in society, the gaze offers both Isabel and Águeda a system of signification outside of phallogocentric language, which allows them to communicate: "A veces cuando la impertinencia era demasiado molesta, las dos amigas se miraban y se daban fuerza con sus ojos; de modo que sin hablar se lo decían todo" (31). Their friendship gives them the support and acceptance that an ideal workplace would have provided them.

In the same manner that their friendship helps them resist their dislocation at the department store, female bonding also facilitates their daily journeys in the changing landscape of the modern capital where women were still "out of place." As shopgirls, both Isabel and Águeda need to move in public spaces intimately connected to the department store. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the appearance of the department store came along with the new architectural, economic, and technological changes brought about by modernity (Crossick and Jaumain 7-8). Electric lighting, big avenues, public transportation systems, spaces of leisure such as restaurants and clubs, and new ways of retailing all influenced and were influenced by the department store. Consequently, the life of those working at such spaces was also affected by the new urban configuration. For example, Isabel and Águeda, as working women, have to travel and inhabit public spaces that replicate the sexual dangers of the department store. In

order to get to work, for instance, they have to make use of the streetcar. However, what modernity offered as a modern improvement in the life of citizens allowing for their fast movement in the city, also proved to be a space of sexual aggression against women's bodies:

[Isabel and Águeda] no se atrevían a tomar un tranvía, donde todas las miradas se fijarían en ellas con tanta insistencia como si no hubiese otras mujeres. En las plataformas tenían que aguantar las audacias de todos aquellos desconocidos . . . Hasta los cobradores buscaban la manera de rozar sus manos, tocar sus brazos, y hasta en ocasiones oprimir sus piernas, con excusa de dejar pasar a un viajero. (33)

According to Clifton Hood, “railways and subways broke down many of the physical barriers and social distances that middle-class New Yorkers sought so hard to establish during the nineteenth century” (308). In the New York public system of transportation, “[a]ll people were continually thrown together in the same physical space and in social settings that were often uncontrolled” (308). Likewise, the spatial particularities of the Madrilenian streetcar—narrow spaces, confluence of different social classes and genders—contributed to its configuration as a place of sexual harassment. In line with dominant moral standards, women traveling in the streetcar were occupying the wrong place and therefore were automatically rendered immoral. Such a perception of women's loose sexual mores justified their sexual harassment by men.

The dangers of sexual harassment in public spaces are also present in the streets of the city, spaces which Isabel and Águeda cannot avoid if they want to make a living. As

Domosh and Seager state “[t]he ubiquitous street harassment that women encounter on an almost daily basis is a not-so-subtle reminder that women in public are considered to be ‘out of place’” (117). In fact, conforming to the narrative voice, “Las pobres mujeres tenían igual miedo a una calle solitaria que a verse entre la multitud” (32). Curiously, the crowd is presented in de Burgos’ novel as an aggressive mass that harasses unchaperoned women and objectifies their bodies. In the streets, Isabel and Águeda have to endure “los dicharachos que les dirigían los hombres que esperaban en las aceras al paso de las mujeres para hostigarlas, molestarlas y dedicarse a seguirlas y perseguirlas con galanteos” (32).

Even semi-public modern spaces turn women into unwilling targets of masculine desire. Isabel and Águeda must eat lunch at the restaurant during their daily break from work at the department store. As the girls mention, it is impossible for them to go home, cook and eat lunch, and then be back at work on time. Thus they are forced to go to the restaurant and “aguantar . . . esa promiscuidad forzosa” (7). Semi-public spaces such as the restaurant became popular not just because of the democratization of prices and menus, but also “as a place to meet . . . , to be seen, or because the restaurant offered something different” (Davidson 661). While this description may have applied to the experience of men in restaurants, unescorted women clients faced a different experience where, like the impoverished middle-class, “evitaba[n] el darse a conocer” (1). In fact, the title of the chapter devoted to Isabel and Águeda’s experience at the restaurant is “El comedor de todos” (Everybody’s restaurant). This title, more than emphasizing the democratic concentration of a variety of people, speaks to the uneasy and awkward relationship among the clients described as “promiscuidad” (4). To start with, the

restaurant is geared toward “la concurrencia vergonzante de la clase media” (4) or those who want to keep up appearances but cannot afford to go to a better place. At the restaurant, class and gender determine the desire for invisibility by the female bodies and pretentious lower middle-class bodies who feel alienated there. At the same time, while the middle-class feels ashamed of eating at “los comedores de a peseta el cubierto” (1), women such as Isabel and Águeda “tenían que aguantar las miradas, los suspiros, las audacias y las inconveniencias de aquellos hombres extraños y desconocidos” (4). Again, working women’s bodies become sexualized and harassed by men in spaces ideologically structured to configure “invading” female bodies as immoral and therefore, open to men’s sexual advances.

In this vein, it can be stated that *La rampa* depicts men in public spaces as a sexually aggressive mass that threatens and alienates working women’s bodies. De Burgos’ narrative appropriation of the mass to refer to men reveals her desire to subvert the contemporary hegemonic discourse that rendered the masses as feminine. Andreas Huyssen, in her study of art and mass culture has concluded that in the late nineteenth century, the masses were conceptualized as feminine in response to the decline of liberalism and “a fear of woman, a fear of nature out of control, a fear of the unconscious, of sexuality, of the loss of identity and stable ego boundaries” (52). In addition, literary critic Stephanie Sieburth has noticed that another source of middle-class fears and anxieties in the nineteenth century city was the idea of the crowd (155). In particular, she states that “as the male individual began to feel lost in the mass, the threat of being devoured or swallowed up in its formlessness made the writers of the day associate the

masses with the whole chain of signifiers defined as ‘low’” (155). However, in *La rampa* such perception of the feminine masses is reversed for it is now defined from the perspective of working women who experience the material and emotional hardships of inhabiting a city in which crowds are mostly comprised of men. De Burgos’ novel associates mass with men and out-of-control masculinity which invades the protagonists’ female bodies and personal space: “. . . como todos los hombres que se les acercaban como lo habían sido allí los otros huéspedes, los vecinos y todos los otros que las molestaban siguiéndolas en la calle, deslizado frases en su oído, mirándolas descaradamente. Estaban heridas de miradas y pretensiones” (37).

On the other hand, the novel also presents another type of urban mass characterized as inherently feminine: “Había para aterrarse ante el espectáculo de la ciudad llena de mujeres desamparadas, al contemplarlas fríamente, desprovistas de dignidad de clase, comprometiéndose y rebajándose las unas a las otras” (18).

Nonetheless, and in contrast to contemporary perceptions that envisioned women and the masses as dangerous, this feminine mass depicted in *La rampa* does not threaten the stability of the status quo but reflects the material difficulties of the individuals that form it. It is a mass of women “empujadas por la necesidad apremiante de vivir y comer” (192), who struggle to survive in a modern city that renders them economically and socially marginal. Thus, against the “formlessness” and de-individualization inherent to the dominant ideology of the urban masses, *La rampa* differentiates the feminine masses as formed by individuals who, due to a patriarchal and capitalist society, are thrown into the general mass of women where they finally lose any opportunity to gain an individualized

social identity.

Isabel's dislocation at the department store mirrors her experience being "out of place" in all other public spaces. In spite of this, her job at the department store also provides her with the necessary economic independence to enjoy various leisure activities and locations, as Susan Larson has argued (xvii). The street, although briefly, also offers moments of joy to Isabel and Águeda. As a consequence, on their way back from the restaurant to the department store, both shopgirls

[g]ozaron un momento la alegría de la calle, más libre y clara por su contraste con el agobio del comedor. . . . Empezaron a andar, siguiendo la calle del Carmen, en dirección a la Puerta del Sol, y bien pronto olvidaron su disgusto para distraerse con la contemplación de los transeúntes y de los escaparates, con una fuerza de expansión juvenil, acortando el paso, como si disfrutaran un paseo y quisieran retardar el momento de llegar al Bazar, donde habían de quedar sepultadas. (13)

For a moment, the street turns into a space of visual enjoyment and freedom for both working women. According to the narrator's description, both shopgirls embody the figure of the *flâneuse* "made possible by the new configurations of consumer culture" (Friedberg 36). As consumers and producers then, working women can enjoy new mobility in the urban space. Their urban journeys to work provide the opportunities to enjoy and contemplate shop windows and other people.

Isabel's money earned at the department store allows her to live independently at a *pensión* or guesthouse, where she is free to use her room as she pleases. The *pensión*,

owned by the old widow Doña Nieves, is described by the narrative voice as a place where moral boundaries disappear. Therefore, although the old widow boasts of respectability and decency, “tenía que hacer la vista gorda a muchas cosas” (25). Men visit Doña Nieves’ rooms where female guests receive them to provide sexual favors. Under the guise of family relations, these men and women use the *pensión* as a site of sexual encounters, transgressing the moral codes of the time.

The guestroom is configured as a liminal modern space where the limits between the public and private are blurred. A home-like space in which guests gather at mealtime in the dining room, the *pensión* also contains anonymous bodies that stay in or visit the rooms. Isabel will also benefit from such freedom for she will eventually allow her boyfriend Fernando to visit her there: “dejando a un lado el recato recibía a Fernando en su habitación” (95). Nonetheless, the guestroom also offers other alternatives in the kind of encounters that take place between the sexes. For example, Isabel and Águeda start a friendship with Joaquín “que no las obligaba a estar en guardia, recelosas y desconfiadas, como tenían que estarlo ante los demás hombres” (38). Certainly, the home-like space of the *pensión* and Isabel’s continuous encounters with Joaquín during meal times favor the beginning of the friendship between the shopgirls and the young man: “el primer día que le invitaban a entrar en su habitación, . . . todos sentían el encanto de aquella naciente familiaridad” (39). They enjoy being together and talking to each other, and their friendship reflects a type of “modern” relationship between men and women devoid of sexual or monetary interest.

The little free time that Isabel enjoys away from her job at the department store

also lets her inhabit other spaces of leisure that appeared with the modernization of the Spanish capital. Apart from going to the cinema, Isabel and Águeda stroll in the park on Sunday afternoons. The park, however, in spite of being configured as a site of public enjoyment is perceived by the shopgirls and the narrative voice as a space of bodily visual display and frustrated desires. In fact, the park “fulfill[s] the same aims underlying the renovation of the urban center” such as the creation of a modern “mode of display for the bourgeoisie” (Thomas 35). Thus, what Isabel and Águeda see there makes them aware of what they do not have: the necessary money and proper social status which would allow them to marry and therefore enjoy the middle-class idea of family life and comfort: “A veces las hería su sensibilidad la contemplación de un grupo de mujeres lujosas; otras las alegres caras de muchachitas frescas y despreocupadas . . . En ocasiones eran parejas de enamorados . . . Los cuadros de familias felices, esposos con hijos pequeñuelos y madres ancianas, eran algo que les hacía daño a su pesar” (44). Furthermore, in contrast to their experience in other public spaces, their modest and worn-out dresses render their bodies totally invisible in the realm of male desire and discourse: “Los hombres parecían pasar a su lado como pisándolas; no se tomaban el trabajo de verles la cara, después de apreciar sus siluetas vulgares y sus pobres vestidos” (44). The park is conceived of as a highly hierarchizal space where middle-class men in search of a wife will only consider single women of their same status. Thus, the park, “lejos de ser un lugar natural de auténtico ‘esparcimiento’ es una naturaleza domesticada, un microcosmos del espacio urbano madrileño, con sus calles, plazas y avenidas” (Delgado, “Subjetividades” 113) where middle-class social rites and behaviors are reenacted. Both shopgirls, unable to use nice

dressess as signifiers of class status, are rendered out of circulation in Madrilenian middle-class society.

The park on Sunday afternoons is also the battleground where competitions between women and their performing bodies use visual display as a weapon. All the women try to wear their most luxurious clothes to compete in luxury and beauty with other women: “Viéndolas, parecía como si no existiese la miseria. Todas hacían un esfuerzo por presentarse con elegancia. . . . Parecían rivalizar en lucir un atavío superior a su medio. . . . Las hijas de padres obreros se engalanaban como señoritas; las empleadas, las muchachas como ellas, que apenas tenían para comer, llevaban sombreritos y vestidos lujosos” (44). David Harvey states that during the nineteenth century, “[t]he transformation of parks . . . into places of sociality and leisure likewise helped to emphasize an extrovert form of urbanization that emphasized public show of private opulence” (44). Dresses are used as semiotic referents to represent a higher social status, which many of these women desire but do not belong to. Therefore, the park becomes a space of social display and performance in which signifiers do not correspond to their referents.

Walking in the park is actually a trope for the shopgirls’ life trajectory in a society which privileges men and the wealthy. What is more, their journey in the spaces of the city delineates a “rhetoric of walking” (de Certeau 98) that underscores the marginal position of female bodies within the dominant patriarchal discourse. Indeed, if “[t]he act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered” (de Certeau 98), it is not strange that Isabel and Águeda “[estén] perdidas en

estas ciudades en las que no hablan más que los hombres, . . . mientras que ellas mueren en *silencio*” (emphasis added 38). Thus, dislocated, without the ability to articulate their desires, “las mujeres no aparec[en] más que como sombras vagas, imprecisas, medrosas y siempre inquietadas” (8-9). Of course, Isabel’s constant movement in the city due to her lack of place also stands for her inability to articulate such displacement through language. As such, the narrative describes Isabel as a woman without the adequate “language” that would help her to construct a strong and well-defined subjectivity and therefore, define her place as an individual in society: “Isabel sentía estas ideas en vez de pensarlas; era como un *balbuceo incoherente* de su espíritu” (emphasis added 18) or “Aquella necesidad le haría a ella ir a confundirse y perderse con las demás, no sabiendo nada de su mañana, sin poder formarse una dignidad y un alma independiente, por más que *barruntaba* las cosas mejor que las otras” (emphasis added 192).

Excluded from the spaces of power designated by the control over language, female bodies become mechanized, performing the aimless routine of their everyday lives in the urban space:

En su vida había mucho de mecánico, de obediencia a la costumbre. Del mismo modo que era una obligación el ir a desempeñar su empleo en el Bazar y acudían ya a él sin darse cuenta, iban las tardes de domingo a dar su paseo por los parques, como las ovejas que salían a pacer en el campo. Sentían perdida su personalidad entre la multitud. (43)

In reality, the mechanization of the shopgirls’ bodies at the department store responds to the new location of shopgirls in “the rationalized industry of display and distribution [of]

the efficient machine store” (Shapiro 56). In the new consumer society, the industrial male body of the past is substituted by the machine-like female body of shopgirls (Shapiro 56).

Ironically, it is a man, their friend Joaquín, who possesses the counter-discourse that would give them the ability to articulate their thoughts and identity. Joaquín is the author’s alter ego, for he speaks and mirrors de Burgos’ feminist discourse. Joaquín speaks the language of the oppressed, reveals the reasons and consequences of the subjugation of women, and provides the solutions to free them from their chains: “Había que acabar con la desigualdad de las costumbres y dar a los dos sexos los mismos derechos y la misma libertad” (40). However, neither of the girls is ready to understand Joaquín’s discourse of women’s liberation and “[se] alarman[on] de todas aquellas cosas cuyo radicalismo las asustaba” (40). Soon their friendship ends when he realizes that the shopgirls’ lives “no era más que rutina, sumisión a las costumbres, falta de decisión y de valentía para quererse liberar. ¡Eran irredentas!” (41).

When their friendship with Fernando ends, both shopgirls apparently lose their only opportunity to acquire a language that they could appropriate and use to “despertar a una vida superior” (41), but they do adopt alternative languages to define their identity in a hostile world. It is at this point in the novel that the destinies of both shopgirls begin to diverge because they adopt different discourses that eventually inhibit their ability to communicate with each other. While Águeda practices a discourse of moderation, Isabel opts to inscribe herself into a discourse of consumerism and pleasure. Águeda, born and raised as a working class woman, has discerned from the life experiences of other women

that bodily pleasures such as sex or overspending have negative consequences for her gender. She possesses a basic language and wisdom that allow her to discern power dynamics and women's oppression. Águeda's ideas are reflected in a short conversation with Isabel:

[Isabel:] —¿No es absurdo que por evitarte un dolor que no sabes si llegará te prives de una felicidad cierta y te pases la vida como un pájaro cantando en la rama y sin atreverte a volar por miedo a caerte?

[Águeda]—Tienes razón; pero yo he visto mucho... Mi tía ha sido una desdichada...; lo fue mi madre...; lo es mi hermana...; y yo sería más desgraciada que ellas aún... (95)

Águeda prefers to abstain from pleasures of the body to distance herself from men's domination. Unwanted pregnancies, poverty, male violence, or social debasement are just some of the consequences she fears if she submits her body to the pleasures of the flesh.

On the other hand, the prospect of an empty life has a different effect on Isabel, whose attitude towards life can be summarized in the motto "Carpe diem." Realizing women's bleak future both at the department store and in the city, Isabel decides to enjoy life's pleasures:

Veía su desdicha, la de sus compañeras en el Bazar; sabía lo que era su porvenir y el de todas aquellas señoritas del almacén que consumían su vida lejos de la luz del sol, sin respirar el aire, sin la alegría del amor y de la libertad, y que fatalmente sería desechadas a su vejez en el mayor desamparo. . . . Tenía sólo las mujeres pobres una temporada efímera,

breve, para conocer la alegría. ¿Por qué no había de prevalecerse de ella? No era justa la crítica acerba que caía sobre las que aprovechaban del modo que les era posible sus dotes de juventud para endulzar su situación . . .

Águeda no admitía su opinión. Era bueno ser condescendientes, pero no dejarse atropellar. (53-4)

Raised as a middle-class girl, Isabel does not have the previous exposure to mechanisms of oppression that relegate female bodies to patriarchal power. Hers is a desiring body without constraints whose longings are exacerbated by her relationship with Fernando. It is when she starts dating him that she begins to perceive her body as lacking and envisions herself as a consumer to fulfill her desire for a new identity: “Ella, que jamás había amado la coquetería, se eternizaba en el espejo. Se encontraba fea y sentía el descontento de su fealdad, sin recursos para disimularla con los trajes y los afeites” (54). In order to impress and please Fernando, the shopgirl metamorphosizes her body using make-up, a time-consuming hairstyle, and new clothing. However, her new language of consumption and artificiality clashes with Águeda’s discourse of “naturalness” and thrift: “Todo eso son embelecos y engaños para sacar dinero. No hay nada tan hermoso como lo natural ni que siente tan bien como el agua y el jabón” (55).

Isabel is at once a producer at work and a consumer in the new spaces of modernity, an ambiguity that raised anxieties in the early twentieth century about women’s proper place in modern society. Interestingly, Isabel’s desire also echoes the turn-of-the-century popular imaginary that perceived female department store workers as consuming bodies who desired a life of stimulation and excitement in order to escape from

their monotonous, boring, and stultifying life within and outside of work (Shapiro 98). Thus, for Isabel, “[e]l variar de traje era renovarse, convertirse en otra mujer, dar un interés de novedad a su figura y un encanto que ella no podía tener” (55). Similar to other turn-of-the-century female characters from Spanish literature, the shopgirl chooses fashion because “imposibilitada de alterar su realidad familiar y social, sus variaciones en el vestuario le ofrecen al menos el espejismo de un cambio” (Delgado, *Imagen elusiva* 22). Nonetheless, what might seem at first as an attempt to escape the position of social immobility into which modern society has placed her, her succumbing to the whims of fashion and appearances is actually another form of patriarchal submission and domination. Thus, “[t]he female body that is freed from the shackles of the paternal law may well prove to be yet another incarnation of that law, posing as subversive but operating in the service of that law’s self-amplification and proliferation” (Butler 119). In this manner, Isabel’s longing for new clothing and other commodities responds to her need to satisfy Fernando’s scopophilic desire for a fetishized femininity. In contrast to Joaquín’s rhetoric of female liberation and patriarchal exploitation, Isabel—and Águeda at first—understands Fernando’s language. His discourse is that of the established order that ignores the hardships of working-class female bodies and constructs high-class women’s bodies as both objects of sexual desire for men and as objects of mimicry for lower-class women:

Aquel lenguaje [de Fernando] lo comprendían ellas mejor; era más sensato, el respeto a todo lo establecido, la resignación fatalista. En vez de hablarles de la miseria de las mujeres . . . las distraía con su conversación ligera, viva

y animada, y hacía desfilar ante sus ojos figuras de mujeres bellas,
atractivas, triunfadoras, que parecían reinar sobre la sociedad toda. (57)

Therefore, in response to Fernando's desire, Isabel becomes a consuming body that fears
"la monotonía de pasar años y años inmovilizada, sin cambiar su silueta" (55).

The consumption of commodities to construct a new identity runs parallel to Isabel's desire to enjoy her body's sexual pleasures. It is her thirst for enjoying her own body that drives her to have sex with Fernando out of wedlock, and thereby risking her reputation: "Había rendido la voluntad por una decisión suprema. Había que aprovechar aquel ardor que existía en el fondo de cada uno, que era su única fortuna . . . Era justo aprovechar su riqueza, su goce, no dejarlo desvanecerse estérilmente. Así al menos habría conocido la opulencia" (92). As a rebellion against the dominant discourse that renders unmarried women's sexual pleasure socially condemned and inappropriate, Isabel decides to enjoy the carnal pleasures of her body.

Isabel's adoption of the patriarchal system of signification—which envisions her as a visual sexual object but obliterates the female body's material realities—precipitates her fall further down the "ramp" of female existence in the modern city. Even her idea of enjoying sex outside the confines of bourgeois morality has ill-fated consequences. For instance, as previously mentioned, Isabel has to spend a large amount of time doing her hair every morning. There is a point when her hair-styling morning ritual starts affecting her job at the department store when she repeatedly fails to arrive at work on time. Her tardiness provokes Don Prudencio's discontent and anger, and he reprimands her on the excessive adornment that she displays such as her hairstyle and her clothing.

Also, although her job at the department store allows her to pay her expenses at first, soon her financial situation is unsustainable: “Con tener que pagar a la usurera, el cuarto, los gastos extraordinarios de su atavío y las propinas a Juanita, no le quedaba lo necesario para comer” (97).

The worst consequence of her carnal desires and enjoyment is her unwanted pregnancy, which forces her to leave her job. Her new status as a poor single mother exposes the workings of modern urban institutions such as *La casa de la maternidad* (The maternity house) or *El Colegio de Criadas* (The school of maids), examples of the institutionalization of discursive practices that construct the female body as dangerous and out of place. After her traumatic experience in *La casa de la maternidad* and the late death of her child, Isabel surrenders her body and therefore her self to the technologies of female bodily control and discipline symbolized by *El Colegio de Criadas*:

. . . tendría que admitir una doble servidumbre de verdadera criada de servir, adoptaría un aire de santidad aparente, sujeta al reglamento, desconfiando de la camaradería hostil de las otras, pagando su comida con un trabajo ímprobo; y luego si le encontraban una casa donde ganar su vida, no por eso dejaría la servidumbre del Colegio. Éste le quitaría sus domingos, sus escasas horas de sentirse libre, que tendría que perder allí en aburridos ejercicios espirituales, que irían demoliendo su alma y su rebeldía hasta dejarla desprovista de su antigua personalidad. La matarían para que otra distinta viviese de su vida corporal. (205-6)

The new discursive construction of Isabel by the institution will alienate her from her

own body, transforming her sense of identity into a “mechanic subjectivity” programmed to serve others. Moreover, her body, her power labor, will be “consumed” by others at the cost of her alienation. In this respect, the Marxian rhetoric of factory alienation in the industrial era is adopted by the narrative voice to describe how modernity has transferred the mechanisms of male factory workers’ exploitation to female working bodies within state and religious institutions and the domestic realm. She will become the invisible female workforce that labors in the marginal and invisible spaces of the domestic space where the materialization of work subverts the bourgeois ideal of the home as a place of leisure and rest: “Entraría en la casa gris para ser la criada gris, la criada sabia, la mujer indeterminada, perdida en las lejanas cocinas, detrás de los largos túneles de los pasillos que separan a las criadas de las otras gentes que viven en la luz” (206). In the end, Isabel will be a body without its own language, a body inscribed into the discourse of submission and domination. She will be forced to join the mass of women without a language of the self: “Engrosaría el rebaño de mujeres calladas” (206).

It should be especially noted that de Burgos’ novel does not finish with Isabel becoming a prostitute. Although debased and consumed, the shopgirl’s fall is epitomized by her entrance into *El Colegio de Criadas*. In this vein, de Burgos draws special attention to the official and institutionalized “prostitution” of female bodies that turns them into cheap labor in the name of charity. The author further associates the exploitation of female bodies through discourses of domination with a number of different kinds of locations and entities, such as civic and religious urban institutions, the national economy and the state.

With its ending, de Burgos' novel contradicts turn-of-the-century competing narratives that debated and focused on urban prostitution as the malady responsible for and resulting from the degeneration of the social fabric—prostitution at this time, was a common topic of public debate. Without downplaying the realities of prostitution, *La rampa* in fact addresses the topic in a very sensitive way. In one of its chapters, there is an intentional narrative move that aims to highlight the failures and hypocrisy of a social class that exploits women's labor and negates their language in favor of its own economic and patriarchal desires. It is not that declassed, impoverished, or working-class women's nature provokes their fall; it is the way in which the dominant class' discourse produces their bodies and subjectivities to create dislocated and invisible female subject positions: “Había rodado la rampa, la rampa buena, que no es la de las malas compañías, ni de la abyección, ni la de esa miseria negra de que abusa el patrono, ni de la lujuria que tiende la asechanza. Era la rampa vulgar, la que preparan las gentes honradas, las despreocupadas de todo lo que pasa en la calle” (99-100).

In comparison to working-class Águeda, Isabel, having been raised as a middle-class woman, embodies the excess and deprivations of her own class. She is the one that cannot conform to the place assigned to impoverished or working-class women, and this causes her discontent and inner fragmentation. Because she does not know her place, she is punished with an unwanted pregnancy, the death of her child, subjugation to Fernando's desires, his final desertion, and her fragmentation and defeat. On the other hand, Águeda, with a basic knowledge learned from her own class experience, is depicted as a self-restrained woman who acts according to her position in society. Aware of the

place she occupies, she has the ability to create a new language for herself thanks to her love relationship with Joaquín. In fact, their bonding is one of equality and understanding in which both members have the same rights and duties. Joaquín and Águeda emerge in the narrative as the perfect example of a love relationship between a man and a woman: “La unión de Águeda y Joaquín no era de esas uniones vulgares, precipitadas, en las que el ardor de la juventud es el único factor que las regula. Era la unión formada por el mutuo afecto, la semejanza de gustos y la estimación” (183). Furthermore, for the narrative voice, their relationship is representative of the family on which a democratic Spain has to be built:

El Estado que constituye la gran familia nacional ha de inspirarse en la familia que integra, en esos hogares nobles y honrados, que por ventura existen, donde se cuida por igual al niño y a la niña, al hombre y a la mujer en su plenitud, y al anciano y a la anciana; envueltos todos en el mismo amor y trabajando todos, sin distinción, con arreglo a sus fuerzas. (111)

Nevertheless, de Burgos’ narrative presents contradictions and fissures in the representation of class that undermine her feminist message. Whereas the narrator condemns the bourgeoisie for setting the path for women’s downfall and degradation, the same narrative voice presents a stereotypical perception of the working-class woman, in particular of female servants. There is a split in the narrative discourse on how maids are portrayed. On the one hand, the narrator describes the terrible work conditions that maids have to endure throughout the novel. As already seen, Isabel’s entrance into *El Colegio de Criadas* will imply her alienation and exploitation as a maid. On a different occasion,

maids are depicted as “siempre en servicio, sin ser dueñas de sus horas de reposo, repitiendo continuamente los mismos quehaceres, sin voluntad, agobiadas por los trabajos más miseros” (17). When explaining who ends up in *La Casa de maternidad*, the sympathetic narrative voice says that “Muchas eran criadas engañadas por los novios o por los señoritos y cruelmente abandonadas después, quedándoles sólo aquella maternidad como un estigma de sus amores” (108). On the other hand, the narrator’s class prejudices come to light in the language s/he uses to describe female servants in other parts of the novel. Thus, when Isabel goes to visit a middle-class friend, the maid who opens the door is portrayed as “una criada con cara de idiota, una de esas pobres bestias domésticas que acaban por atontarse a fuerza de repetir . . . un trabajo monótono y sin fin” (69). Isabel’s young maid is not described in a better light: “[Isabel] hacía aprender a la greñuda y arisca muchacha la lección, en la que ella ponía toda la buena voluntad que tienen las sirvientes para engañar a los señoritos” (159). In the same way, when Isabel and Fernando’s coexistence at home becomes problematic, “[l]as criadas . . . contribuían a aumentar la atmósfera de malestar y hostilidad que [Isabel] sentía en torno suyo. Era inútil que se esforzara en pagarles corriente y en que comieran abundante. [Eran] descaradas, negligentes [y] no conocían la autoridad” (174).

The contradictory representation of working-class women is actually an aspect that de Burgos’ shared with other European female writers, especially those writing in the nineteenth century. Cora Kaplan, in her article “‘Like a Housemaid’s Fancies’: The Representation of Working-class Women in Nineteenth-century Writing,” describes how texts by authors such as Virginia Woolf or Elizabeth Gaskell,

are peculiarly incoherent and contradictory about working-class women; an ethical and empathetic exculpation of their subjectivity alternates with a discourse which defines them as the ultimate repository of ‘bad womanhood’ or negative femininity—the sign of excess, transgression and degraded passion that threatens the bourgeoisie in general, and its pure women in particular. (61)

Indeed, Carmen de Burgos’ description of maids as cunning, untrustworthy, uncontrollable, and animal-like unravels a middle-class perspective that destabilizes the novel’s feminist message rendering it ambiguous.

In general, however, Carmen de Burgos’ novel achieves its feminist purpose denouncing the invisibility of female labor and its marginal place within urban modernity. Through Isabel’s metaphorical and psychological trajectory in the geographical and lived city, de Burgos’ offers the reader a language of liberation, the one that Isabel is not able to grasp. By bringing to the fore urban working women’s work and miseries, de Burgos traces a visual and visible map of female labor and the discursive and spatial formations and technologies of female domination. In all, *La rampa* is a treatise on women’s liberation, offering the reader the language and arguments for a more just and fair world where “la mujer española pueda ocupar el lugar que le corresponde en las sociedades modernas” (*Mujer moderna* 284).

3.2. A *Castiza* Commodity: The Salesgirl in Ramón Gómez de la Serna's *La Nardo*

Es grato ver pasar los senos frente a la ventana del café, hacia el jardín público, cruzándose con los que van hacia el centro populoso de la ciudad, más engolados, cubiertos por el más hermético peto. Todos han salido para adornar la ciudad, para poner inquietud en ella, para cumplir algo así como un deber cívico

Gómez de la Serna

Although Gómez de la Serna coined *Ramonismo* as his own aesthetic movement and described himself as a writer not belonging to any specific literary group or trend, critics tend to locate him as an essential part of the European and Spanish avant-garde movements of the 1920s and 1930s. Born in 1880, Gómez de la Serna had direct exposure to the new European cultural trends while living in Paris from 1909 to 1911. In this city, he was deeply influenced by the work of artists such as Guillaume Apollinaire and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. On his return to Spain, he became “[el] puente entre las vanguardias europeas y el ambiente literario hispánico” (Sánchez Vidal 14). Artists of the so-called “Generación del 27” such as Luis Cernuda, Luis Buñuel, and Salvador Dalí shared their ideas at Gómez de la Serna’s weekly *tertulias* or literary talks in the Madrilenian *café* Pombo. As César Nicolas describes it, “toda la literatura del 27 está teñida de ramonismo” (13).

Gómez de la Serna, wanting to fashion a new literary expression, detached his writing from the language “falaz, hipócrita [y] pretérito” (del Rey Briones 25) employed in the mimetic representation of reality in the realist and naturalist tradition. For the Madrilenian author, reality could only be apprehended looking beyond the superficial, beyond the mirror image of realist literature, in order to see “cómo se descompone la vida detrás de la vida” (*Obras completas* 708).⁹ Only through “hyper-active contemplation,”

⁹ Interestingly, critics of nineteenth-century realist literature have amply refuted the fallacy that realist literature mimics reality. The case of realist writer Benito Pérez Galdós is particularly illustrative because

can the artist “find the salvation in a new consciousness of being alive” (Hoyle 20). Such awareness allows the artist to experience the surrounding world “fragmented into a succession of passing, heightened moments, or enjoyable epiphanies that require the coining of the new term *greguería* to define them” (Hoyle 20). The *greguería* is a humorous metaphor that draws attention to the artificial construction of the text (Godón-Martínez 29). It results from a conscious manipulation of language on the part of the author, in which the referent is stripped of its conventional signification by the use of new signifiers that bring unexpected meanings to the text. In contrast to realist or naturalist literature, Gómez de la Serna’s poetics undermines the idea that there is a natural and clear correspondence between the referent and the sign. Participating in the aesthetic principles of the avant-garde, his goal is to free himself from that understanding of reality and reformulate it (Godón-Martínez 27). Now, the material world is encoded by a prismatic and intertwined perspective that disintegrates reality (Nicolás 11). Gómez de la Serna’s aesthetic perspective “atomizes” the world because, in his opinion, “la constitución del mundo es fragmentaria, su fondo es atómico, su verdad es disolvencia” (*El Rastro* 67).

Thanks to the “atomizing” qualities of the *greguería*, the artist is able to perceive the “sensations and impressions [which] usually remain unconscious, unexpressed hidden by the normal consciousness of a reality that is ordered and stabilized by a goal-directed reason, employing concepts fixed permanently in language” (Hoyle 20). For Gómez de la Serna, the free association of ideas, or the free association of the referent and the sign, brings about a new state of consciousness. Nonetheless, such free association, as Alan

his fictional work “demands consideration of the fundamental and problematic function of language as a means of representation” (Urey 196).

Hoyle remarks, always renders “its incongruity in some way congruent with a reality some readers can try to recognize and share” (22). In this fashion, whilst his literary production is more experimental than previous writers of the modernist tradition such as Azorín, Miguel de Unamuno, or Pío Baroja, it does not share the complete conceptual disassociation that surrealism demands. Indeed, Gómez de la Serna’s literary work, especially that written before 1936, is less innovative than some critics or he himself would have liked (Fernández Utrera 54, César Nicolas 12). For instance, whereas the author favors the structural fragmentation and apparent lack of unity of novels, and also rejects the supposed harmony of perception of the realist or naturalist novel, “Ramón no puede escapar a esa tendencia final a la unidad de lo múltiple característico de toda una parte de la vanguardia” (Fernández Utrera 52).

Considering the author’s desire to rupture the conventional association of the sign with the referent in his narratives, it is easy to understand his fascination with one of the most popular places in the Spanish capital: the *Rastro*. The Rastro is an open-air flea market in the street Ribera de Curtidores, Plaza de Cascorro and others, where numerous stalls and stores display a great variety of products for sale. Regularly visiting the Rastro, Gómez de la Serna encountered thousands of objects that were “removed from [their] proper place and jumbled up randomly next to other objects” (Hoyle 25). Such “apocalyptic chaos of objects” is a perfect example of the “liberation from the dominant system of language fixed to the conventional concepts of things” (Hoyle 25). In the stalls of the flea market, objects, decontextualized and with a new value ascribed to them, lose their conventional meaning and become “cosas reveladoras en su insignificancia, en su llaneza, en su mundanidad. ‘Maravillosas asociadoras de ideas’” (Gómez de la Serna *El*

Rastro 80). For him, “el Rastro es sobre todo, más que un lugar de cosas, un lugar de imágenes y asociaciones de ideas” (*El Rastro* 84). However, the author’s interest in everyday objects is not aroused by mere aesthetic reasons. José Carlos Mainer believes that Gómez de la Serna’s aesthetic concentration on the world of objects, “no es sino una huida ante la precaria realidad de una época concreta que habría de alumbrar . . . la crisis económica de 1929” (78). In fact, Gómez de la Serna shares with his contemporaries, especially other Spanish and international artists, a feeling of distrust in modern society, a distrust that positions the individual/artist in a state of existential anguish and sense of displacement in a period undergoing complex technological, industrial, and economic changes (Mainer 80).

Gómez de la Serna first implemented his personal *ars poetica* of the greguería in the book *El Rastro* (1915), and it is also here that he exhibited his own vision of the objects—and people—that he encountered in the flea market. In these everyday objects on display, Gómez de la Serna finds the chance to transcend conventional reality. *El Rastro* then becomes “la síntesis de su literatura” (de Río Briones). His fascination with the marginal space of the Rastro and the objects sold there was further manifested in two others works: the short novel *La abandonada del Rastro* (1929) and the novel *La Nardo* (The Spikenard Woman) (1930). In *La abandonada del Rastro* (The Abandoned Woman of the Rastro), the French protagonist, Renée, becomes fascinated with and addicted to purchasing and collecting extravagant objects that she finds in the Madrilenian flea market. Her obsessive attachment to objects not only allows her to escape from an unrewarding relationship with her husband but also emphasizes the gradual objectification of her body by the narrator. In the end, her husband abandons her at a

store in the Rastro where her body is finally fragmented and dissolved into multiple objects: “Se disolvía en sombrero, dentadura postiza, sillón ortopédico, corsé papiro, cabeza de peinadora fracasada, ojos de cristal, cuerpo de prueba modistil, piernas de muestra de sedería y sombrilla colgada de los alambres tendidos como paraguas inocentes” (283). The female body is thus “devorado por los objetos, que son los que acaban apoderándose del espacio de la fábula y convirtiéndose en los verdaderos protagonistas” (del Río Briones 147). Furthermore, the progressive fragmentation of Renée’s body becomes a metaphor for the construction and gradual disintegration of the narrative calling attention to both the self-referential quality of the novel and the arbitrary convention of the linguistic sign.

Aurelia, a stall vendor in the Rastro and the main character of the novel *La Nardo*, is also subjected to the fragmentation and objectification of her body by the narrator and the male characters in the story. Like de Burgos’s *La rampa*, *La Nardo* resembles a bildungsroman mapping the female protagonist’s trajectory in the urban geography after she leaves the safety of the domestic space. After working as a vendor at her market stall, Aurelia ends up as a prostitute through the machinations of Samuel, a middle-class young man who becomes her pimp. In her journey of self-debasement, she moves into different spaces of the Madrilenian city as a specularized body prostituted by a variety of middle-class men. The novel ends with the death of La Nardo and her lover—her former client—a married man. Realizing that there is no space for a love relationship between a married man and a prostitute in Madrid’s society, they decide to commit suicide together.

In both “La abandonada del Rastro” and *La Nardo*, a character’s gender significantly affects his or her relationship with the objects of the Rastro and the female

protagonists' bodies. In particular, Gómez de la Serna's *greguerías* and the masculinist point of view of his narrators allows for the fragmentation of the female characters' bodies through their association with the commodities that surround them in the market. In fact, the representation of both female protagonists is part of a more general misogynistic tendency on the part of the author to objectify female characters to contain his fascination for and intimidation by the female body. Critics such as José Carlos Mainer, Robert C. Spires, and María Soledad Fernández Utrera have already demonstrated how Gómez de la Serna and most male-authors of the vanguards "[i]n spite of their 'new art' with its alleged rejection of nineteenth-century technologies of representation, . . . continue to mimic the female constructs passed on to them through the ages" (Spires 220). Interestingly, as Robert C. Spires states, even though avant-garde artists were accused by their contemporaries of emasculating the male image and creating an effeminate new literary expression, the truth is that "male-authored vanguard texts project female representations that can be considered both seditiously threatening and stereotypically comforting to a virile discursive tradition" (219-20). Certainly, Ramón Gómez de la Serna's innovative narrative techniques such as the *gregerías* actually allowed him to offer more descriptive and sexualized images of female body parts such as female *senos* (female breasts), one of the author's most recurrent literary motifs.

To this effect, Diego Rivera's portrait of Gómez de la Serna, "Retrato de Ramón Gómez de la Serna" (Figure 1, see page 242 of this thesis) is revealing. Considered the finest representative of the avant-garde during the 1920s, Gómez de la Serna attracted the admiration of national and international contemporary artists. Thus, Rivera's painting is the portrait "del héroe de la vanguardia española" (Fernández Utrera 157). However, the

portrait speaks not only to the avant-garde masculinist gaze but also to Gómez de la Serna's. Critic María Soledad Fernández Utrera notes how the contrast between the representation of the Madrilenian author and the female image in the same painting brings to the fore the masculinist avant-garde's conceptualization of women (158-9). In the painting, a metaphorical and literal multi-faceted Gómez de la Serna occupies the center of the composition. The multiple "heads" that the writer possesses signify the manifold intellectual facets of his protean personality. In direct dialogue with this image of the thinking male subject, a female head appears in the top left corner. In contrast to the surrealist writer's portrayal, the female head, depicted through a realist lens, is deprived of the complex multilayered personality of her male counterpart in the artistic composition. She embodies "la representación más característica de la mujer en el arte vanguardista: disminución física y espiritual" which results in "la visión unívoca del ser de Ella" (Fernández Utrera 158). Such artistic expression of the female and male body shows that "el narcisismo masculino es incapaz de representar a la mujer como no sea en la forma de reflejo negativo de su propia imagen" (Fernández Utrera 159).

José Carlos Mainer, in considering the aesthetic and ideological reasons for the erotization and fragmentation of the female body, connects this stereotypical masculinist representation with Gómez de la Serna's immature sexual identity: "existe una experiencia vivida, traumática incluso, de un tema que . . . siempre vio desde una inmadurez personal que por un lado es ávida . . . y, por otro, llena de atávicos temores" (20). However, this critic also correlates Gómez de la Serna's representation of women as "metáforas . . . para la sublimación de oscuras realidades de marginación o descontento [con] un aspecto típico de la literatura de época de crisis" of this time (20). Indeed, as my

analysis of *La Nardo* will show, female characters also incarnate the author's anxieties about the pervasive negative effects of modern consumer culture.

In reality, the female head that Diego Rivera includes in Gómez de la Serna's portrayal corresponds to a wax doll that the Spanish writer kept in his study. The author had a particular predilection not just for random objects, but also for wax dolls and mannequins. The Madrilenian author's fetish became so involved that he began to reenact a romantic love relationship with the human-size wax doll or mannequin. He would buy for them jewelry, clothes, and other adornments and would dress them according to his own tastes. When his first doll broke, he wore mourning clothes, and his own wife, Luisa Sofovich, felt a sense of rivalry with her husband's inanimate lovers (Cabañas Alamán 152, 154). He would not give the doll or mannequin a name, and he admitted that one of the most thrilling qualities of the doll was that it remained silent: "Puedo no hacerla ningún caso sin sentir sus quejas" (Gómez de la Serna qtd. in Cabañas Alamán 153). As the writer himself confessed in his book *Automoribunda*: "Mi muñeca de cera es la mujer ideal" (qtd. in Cabañas Alamán 154).

Doris Meyer affirms that Gómez de la Serna might have kept the mannequin in his study to participate in the avant-garde's anti-bourgeois discourse that sought to shock the middle-class (*épater la bourgeoisie*) (291). Meyer also states that the Spanish writer might have used the mannequin as a symbol of "the creator's dream of giving birth to the characters of his imagination, those that he 'dresses and undresses' on paper (291). However, the gender and power configuration arising from the author's relationship with dolls and mannequins is clearly one of male empowerment and female subservience. For Cabañas Alamán, "la visión fetichizada de las mujeres en las novelas de Ramón es

análoga a la auténtica devoción del autor por las muñecas de cera, con quienes son frecuentemente comparadas” (152). Furthermore, the author’s discomfort and personal anguish about “un proceso económico de colectivización del consumo, de la precariedad de las modas, de las continuas devaluaciones cuyo remoto origen asusta al usuario” (Mainer 28) might have influenced the author’s obsession with dolls and later on with mass-produced mannequins. In my opinion, Gómez de la Serna fancied a world in which he could possess, dress, and undress mass-produced mannequins and dolls in order to feel in control of the process of commodification itself.

Gómez de la Serna might have admired women—he was indeed emotionally and intellectually attached to Carmen de Burgos for two decades—but female characters in his novels are often depicted from a negative perspective, either because they are easily seduced, sexually threatening or artificial and adulterous (del Rey Briones 46).

Paradoxically, in his desire to shock the bourgeoisie, Gómez de la Serna might have replicated the same nineteenth- and early twentieth-century middle-class discourse that he attempted to debunk. This discourse positioned women’s bodies as inferior objects to be looked at and contained by the male gaze. In this sense, he participates in Walter Benjamin’s practice of “extend[ing] the role of woman as object of the poetic urban gaze from the mid-nineteenth century to the modernism of the twentieth century” (Parsons, *Streetwalking* 37).

The recurrent specularization and objectification of the female subject in Gómez de la Serna’s work is particularly relevant in *La Nardo*, which confirms Felski’s statement that “[a] text which may appear subversive and destabilizing from one political perspective becomes a bearer of dominant ideologies when read in the context of

another” (27 *Gender of Modernity*). In a preliminary reading, *La Nardo*, although offering innovative narrative techniques such as the use of *greguerías*, also codifies the working-class female protagonist’s body as a commodity fetish ready to be consumed and traded by middle-class men. Her prostituted body thus becomes “the locus of a more or less competitive exchange between two men” (Irigaray 368): the pimp and the client. Similarly, the protagonist’s configuration as a commodity is directly related to both her job as a market vendor and her reluctance to remain “in her place” motivated by “a desire for commodities[,] closely associated with moral laxity and the transgression of sexual mores” (Felski, *Gender of Modernity* 72). *La Nardo*, like Benjamin’s description of the “[f]eminine fauna of the arcades: prostitutes, grisettes, old-hag shopkeepers, female street vendors, glovers, demoiselles” (Benjamin qtd. in Leslie 98), makes “explicit [the] conflation of woman and commodity” (Parsons, *Streetwalking* 37). In the Rastro, as in the Paris arcades described by Benjamin, “[c]apitalist modernity . . . conjures up a market of female types” (Leslie 98) and Aurelia’s working body is turned into a commodity much like the objects on display and marketed in the store.

In fact, in *La Nardo*, Aurelia’s body is a complex sign constructed by overlapping meanings. On the one hand, she is simultaneously portrayed as an avid consumer and as a commodified and highly sexualized item in the Madrilenian consumer market. The protagonist’s representation in the narrative also symbolizes working-class women’s uncontrollable sexuality by configuring her as an atavistic and authentic national body. However, the objectification, commodification, and specularization of Aurelia’s prostituted body also brings to the fore an alternative and complementary reading of the novel, in which her body is configured as the mirror through which the middle-class male

characters and the narrator project their own insecurities, sexual anxieties and desires. In this sense, “the sexual promiscuity of the prostitute provides the analytic model for a parallel semiotic promiscuity, an endless flow of meanings in and out of her hollowed-out image” (Teal 84). Thus, Aurelia’s body is infused with a variety of meanings depending on her middle-class client’s needs and desires. Ultimately, this alternative reading reveals that the figure of the prostitute as the embodiment of the Madrilenian essence lays bare male anxieties about the “decadent and artificial nature of modern life” (Felski, *Gender of Modernity* 20) that corrupts the spirit of the Spanish capital.

Significantly, the novel begins with the description of Aurelia’s stall at the Rastro, had given a predominant position to the objects that she sells there: “Tenía un puesto de porcelanas, muebles, cacharros y ropas en la Ribera de Curtidores” (13). Soon after, the narrator points to the symbiotic relationship between the objects that she sells and her own body, which already accentuates the potential for “her objectification, her susceptibility to processes of fetishization, display, profit and loss, the production of surplus value, [which] situate her in a relation of resemblance to the commodity form” (Doane qtd. in Felski, *Gender of Modernity* 64). Her location at the flea market underscores the risks of having her body engulfed by the mercantile relations that characterize and take place in such a space. Her outstanding and uncommon—and therefore, abnormal—beauty is actually the result of Aurelia’s direct contact with the commodities that she sells: “Su belleza había crecido como abonada por todo aquel conjunto de cosas, adunadas en el hondón de la Ribera” (13).

The objectification of Aurelia’s working body at the stall is further developed when the narrator compares her to a “muñeca de cera” (16). In this respect, I find it is

especially relevant to connect Aurelia's depiction with Gómez de la Serna's purchase of his first wax doll at the Rastro: "Un día bajaba al Rastro con Tomás Borrás, y de pronto, en la visión de la tarde, bajo los toldos del vial de las Américas, la vimos. Era como una esclava, desnuda y desmelenada, que se vendía en el mercado" (Gómez de la Serna qtd. Cabañas Alamán 152). According to the author's testimony, the Rastro is the space where the male gaze is empowered and free to imagine the doll as a sensuous female slave ready for his own consumption. The author's choice of the third person singular form of the verb "venderse" to explain the doll's commodification in the market is also striking. At one level, "venderse" can refer to the fact that the doll is sold at the market as an object, but at another level, interpreting the verb in its reflexive form, it can also refer to the idea that the doll is actually selling herself. Thus, constructing the doll as the female desire to be bought and consumed by the male shopper results in a displacement of male sexual desire onto the doll, an idea that will be also reproduced in the case of Aurelia's representation.

Similarly to the narrator's configuration of Aurelia as a potential commodity, male shoppers' scopophilic gazes construct her as a commodity fetish, stripping her of any subjectivity: "Los curiosos la repasaban como a los objetos que la rodeaban y se veía que pensaban mirándola 'esa chuchería sí que me la llevaba yo'" (14). Curiously, when Aurelia is located in the marginal spaces of the city, her working-class body, although described as unusually beautiful, is associated with a "chuchería" or trinket by male shoppers. Her marginal location configures her as an attractive commodity fetish without excessive value, an expendable object from the market that once used can be easily discarded. In this fashion, the Rastro, apart from the literary and metaphysical-liberatory

connotations that Gómez de la Serna ascribes to it in his aesthetic postulates, also is presented in the narrative as a space of mercantile exchange characterized by the commodification of the products on display. Objects, and by extension, the street vendor's body, cannot free themselves from the mechanisms of demand and specularization of modern consumption.

At her stall in the Rastro, Aurelia's actual commodification has not yet taken place. Interestingly, the fact that her body is still not in circulation as a commodity is directly related to the girl's sexual decency. Aurelia is in fact described as a girl with "honestidad" (16), who "[d]esde la mañana se estaba defendiendo de las garras que tiene el hombre para la mujer seductora" (15). The working girl refuses to be objectified by the male gaze, making use of her own gaze in a defiant manner. At her stall, "veía llegar a todos, sin arredrarle ningún tipo, sin quitar los ojos de las malas miradas" (14). Her challenging gaze and attitude counteracts the male gaze establishing herself as a subject. At different points in the novel, the narrator highlights the fact that in the chaotic world of mercantile transactions in which everything has to be in circulation, she stands as a heroic and strong woman who defends her place outside of the circuits of capitalist commodification: "era belleza que en la repugnancia de estarlo vendiendo todo no se quería vender. Tenía la entereza de levantarse en aquella ribera de heroicidad, donde todo se menosprecia y se recoge" (14) or "Tenía el arrojo que había que tener en aquella manigua libre" (16). Knowing the place she needs to occupy in the world of the flea market as a female vendor who preserves her sexual modesty gives Aurelia the freedom to converse with men without fearing confrontation with them: "Se la veía dispuesta a la alegría de parlamentar con el hombre y sin temer a la lucha encarnizada del amor" (15).

Language also serves as her weapon against men's sexual harassment. By insulting the men who try to harass her in public, she redefines male bodies as effeminate and grotesque—"¡Tío preñado!" (15)—or sexually perverted—"¡Tío cochino!" (15). At the same time, by expressing her discontent when men harass her body at the market, she constructs herself in public as a decent girl who does not tolerate any sexual transgressions against her body.

Aurelia's configuration as a beautiful, sensual, uncontrollable and defiant character responds to the narrator's classist perception of the working-class woman—a perception that coincides with other middle-class representations of the working-class woman already analyzed in this study. Such construction of Aurelia exposes the narrator's titillating sexual desire to possess her. Indeed, the emphasis on her modesty, on her working-class body as "virgin," fashions her into a first-hand commodity, that which has not yet been explored or used by others. This characteristic makes her even more attractive to the men's desires and renders her more alluring. Thus, in her place at the market, she "[o]frecía durezas de magnolia aún arropada por el apretado corsé de todas sus blusas, *difíciles de entreabrir* después de haber sido siempre tan honestas" (emphasis added 15). Symbolizing Aurelia's sexual decency by the difficult-to-open shirts she wears, the narrator not only emphasizes her virginity but also reveals his own desire to peep into her tight shirt, imagining the sensuous pleasures that her virgin and naked body, might offer.

The narrator's desire is met later in the novel. One day, when Aurelia abandons her stall to go home, Samuel Barrios, a student originally from Toledo, approaches her in the street. The stall vendor, instead of ignoring his daring question—"¿Se la puede

acompañar para saber de qué color tiene la voz...?” (24)—as it would have been expected, turns around and “con una sonrisa de corazón abierto de par en par” replies to his question: “Hasta ahora no había yo oído que las voces tuviesen color” (24). The working girl’s change of attitude towards Samuel’s approach has an illuminating source: “La Nardo sintió que era así como ella había soñado que le hablase un mozo, con esas incongruencias y medios tonos *que sólo se oyen en las novelas*” (24 emphasis added). It is the romantic and poetic language used in novels that actually has a decisive effect on Aurelia. But these novels are not canonic novels, but mass-produced “novelones, impresos en letra muy grande, en papel de periódico [que] siempre estaba leyendo” (14). Her love for reading mass-commodified literature leads her to lower her defenses against an objectifying male sexual desire, which marks the beginning of her downfall—a recurrent motif in nineteenth-century literature, Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* being a clear example of this correlation. Associating the female character’s downfall with her excessive consumption of low culture signals what critics such as Andreas Huyssen and Laurie Teal have seen as the codification of mass culture as feminine and decadent by artists since the nineteenth century (47, 81). In particular, “shopgirls were themselves perceived by middle-class observers as consumers of goods and leisure products bound up in the fantasies produced by popular culture, particularly fantasies tied to the genre of the romance” (Shapiro 1). Such association exposes anxieties about the pernicious influence of mass-commodified literature in women’s [sexual] desires and, at a more general level, about the incontrollable and pervasive effects of the commodification of human existence.

The adoption of the rhetoric of romantic novels by Aurelia shows the pervasive and harmful influence of such literature on women. The working girl has configured Samuel as “el Salvador” (36) or the savior: “Un chico decente que podrá hacer lo que quiera en la vida y que me sacará de vendedora de pobreza” (35). In the alternative mental space that she creates, Samuel, like a Prince Charming, will rescue her from a demeaning job that entails selling worthless objects at the market. On the other hand, her mother reminds her of the material reality of women’s existence and the need to keep the economic freedom that the sales at her flea market stall give her: “Quéjate encima... Sólo con ese puesto tendrías una renta para vivir en caso de morir yo... ¿Crees tú que me hubiera yo casado con tu padrastro si no hubieras quedado independiente gracias a ese cebo de pobreza?” (36).

Novels are not the only mass-produced type of culture that Aurelia consumes and that contribute to the commodification of her body. She also reads the newspaper that announces the imminent destruction of the Earth by a meteor. Such news spreads a sense of urgency and immediacy among the Madrilenian masses that the working girl shares. La Nardo “se sentía aquella mañana floja y como indefensa ante aquel saldo que imponía a la vida el anuncio del cometa” (24). The news about the asteroid confers a different value on life itself: now, existence also gains a mercantile value —“saldo”—which has to be consumed while it lasts. The perspective of imminent death and the reevaluation of life, disorients and disarms Aurelia, making her vulnerable to Samuel’s approach.

As a consequence of her reading habits and her infatuation with Samuel, Aurelia is unable to see the young man’s duplicitous language. The stall vendor misreads Samuel’s signs, assigning them a romantic meaning. Thus, the dirty look that he throws

at her—"Samuel la miró como a pan comido, con mirada de avaricia suprema, con fauces de dragón" (51)—is decoded as a sign that "aquel hombre la adoraba" (37) and what she perceives as a unique love story—"No iba a ser aquel amor un amor cualquiera" (37), Samuel sees as a sexual enterprise. The commodification of the stall vendor by Samuel is made clear from the beginning. For him, his relationship with her is "un negocio alegre" (27), a business in which his power is established by his control over a system of signification comprised of empty signifiers, which she takes as the truth: "Él la mentía mucho y ella le solía decir: "Sabes más que Lepe, Lepijo y su hijo" (29). Owing to her lack of education as a working-class woman—which brings into question her ability to read—she takes as the truth the fake narratives that Samuel tells her. Aurelia, mesmerized by his knowledge, loves him even more: "Te quiero porque sabes la historia de todo" (32). The false narratives that Samuel uses to impress and control Aurelia reflect both his diminishing attitude towards women and the lower classes: "La dominaba. Ella quería comprar aceitunas al aceitunero pero él la demostraba que estaban envenenadas, que de ningún modo debían comerse aquellas aceitunas remojadas en agua de arrabales" (30). Not only does he subject her to the vision of reality that he fashions to his own convenience, but also but also shapes Aurelia's conception of space within the city constructing the "arrabales" or peripheral neighborhoods of Madrid as polluted.

Aurelia's acceptance of Samuel's discourse runs parallel to her displacement from the safeguard of her stall at the Rastro to her free circulation in the public space of Madrid. At first she is mostly described staying at her market stall, yet once she begins her relationship with Samuel, she appears roaming the streets or occupying other spaces within the city. It is not strange then that after her mother reprimands her for

underestimating the economic security that the market stall can give her, Aurelia “salió a escape, buscando en la calle y en el novio consuelo” (37), a gesture that points to her rejection of domestic advice and security, and to her preference for inhabiting the public space and male desire. Her “becoming public” also implies the transformation of her body into a geographical entity, which Samuel explores and deciphers gradually: “Samuel iba sabiendo todos los caminos de Aurelia” (75). What is more, as studied below, her becoming “public” will imply not just becoming mobile in the city but also becoming a commodity for public consumption. Again, *La Nardo* validates the nineteenth-century idea that “all women who loitered risked being seen as whores” (Buck-Morss 119).

Simultaneously, her inscription in the male discourse and the Madrilénian public space bestows her with a new understanding of her own body as chameleonic. While previously her circumscription to her market stall gave her “[un] gesto de hembra siempre en pie, un aire desafiador” (13), Aurelia’s mobility in the public spaces of the city confers her a different awareness of her self: “ella se iba sola por la calle de la Ruda, como si hubiese descubierto que tenía una belleza distinta para cada día, orgullosa como si fuese vestida con diferente disfraz que el día anterior” (30). Inscribed within man’s language, her body begins to be endowed with the adornment and artifice of the commodity, which will eventually help Samuel put her into circulation as a prostitute in public. Certainly, soon after they start living together and Aurelia abandons her home and her place at the market stall, the young man puts into motion the necessary marketing mechanisms to carry out her commodification as a prostituted body. Before putting her on the market, Samuel needs to stimulate buyers’ desire for the commodity by openly

displaying it in public spaces. The Madrilenian street functions as a shop window or display cabinet where male buyers gaze at the objects for sale: “Samuel comenzó a pasear a La Nardo por la ciudad, para meterla bien por los ojos de los otros, ansioso de especular con su belleza” (99).

Aurelia’s body is subjected to “masculine specula(riza)tion” (Irigaray 367) without her awareness at first. In order for the girl to accept her own commodification, Samuel has to feed her desire for commodities. Thus, “[e]l marrullero” (31) persuades her through language to believe that she deserves a better location in the social ladder, which is clearly presented by the narrator’s choice of words in the characters’ dialogue:

En aquel relente azulado y bajo aquel escaparate de pendientes de la
noche madrileña, de cielo bajo porque el pedestal está muy alto, sentía
Samuel con instinto chulo que Aurelia se pervertía de deseos.

La hacía preguntas que la hiciesen ambicionar.

--¿Y tú, qué querías ser?

--¿Yo? Reina de la belleza.

--Eso ya lo eres.

--Pero no voy en la carroza iluminada en que va la reina de la
belleza... Quisiera no ir hundida en esta sombra de la noche. (102)

The sky filled with shining stars of the Madrilenian night is presented as a shop window showcasing earrings. Also, for the narrative voice, the sky is perceived to be low in relation to the metaphorical position that Aurelia occupies now on a very high pedestal. In such a commodified environment, in which even nature acquires the qualities of modern retailing, Samuel is also defined according to his role in the market as the trader

of Aurelia's body: a *chulo* or pimp. Consumption and sexual desire then become intertwined in Aurelia who now is perverted by desires.

Another marketing technique that Samuel employs to attract men's gazes and arouse their desire for Aurelia is making her and another beautiful woman dance together a *chotis* in neighborhood balls. Samuel's strategy highlights his knowledge of the workings of male sexual desire and retailing strategies, offering a visual display of male fantasies for specular consumption: "Había un rezongo en los más bravucones.— ¡No se podía consentir que dos mozas como aquellas bailasen solas!" (106) By selecting the men who can approach Aurelia based on their economic status and then immersing the girl in a schizophrenic discourse of desire, debasement, and money, Samuel pushes the working-class girl into prostitution. On the one hand, he encourages her to flirt with the men he chooses to obtain money from them. On the other hand, when she returns from her sexual encounters, he demeans her by calling her immoral and worthless: "en una brusca transición de hombre celoso ser revolvía contra ella y encontraba motivo para insultarla. . . La Nardo bajaba la cabeza como si hubiese visto la inmensidad de su pecado" (107). Yet, the girl does rebel by accusing him of not being sensible. Her straightforward discourse, without artifice, actually uncovers Samuel's fragmentary and unstable identity, which underlies his discourse. Without any doubt, when she attempts to break the mechanisms through which he raises his self-worth and diminishes Aurelia's, Samuel explodes in rage: "La Nardo, con sus palabras sencillas y bien puestas hacía estallar a Samuel como a un neumático pinchado con un alfiler" (108). But ultimately, the young man forces Aurelia to stop talking—"tapándole la boca" (108)—and "encontraba la manera de hacer las paces y de buscar los encantos de su querida" (109), bringing her

back under his dominion. Samuel's behavior, exhibiting "anger, jealousy, blaming, recurring moods, . . . trauma symptoms [,] emotional abuse and domination/control," is consistent with what psychologists would call an "abusive personality" (Dutton 140)—which actually stands for an insecure and unstable personality. In this way, Samuel's fits of jealousy, amorous devotion for, and degradation of Aurelia shed light on his own neurotic subjectivity, which he projects onto her.

Entangled in Samuel's contradictory language, Aurelia becomes a prostitute. Interestingly, her clients will consist only of middle-class men, and like Samuel, they will all project their insecurities and desires on Aurelia's body. After her first client, a stock breeder, "la Nardo se quedó sabia de infidelidades ante la vida. Ya llevaba ella la iniciativa y buscaba por su cuenta" (111). In this manner, Aurelia understands her place is in the sexual economy of Madrilenian society: she becomes "a seller and commodity in one" (Benjamin qtd. in Buck-Morss 121). Immersed in the mechanisms of prostituting her body, she next finds a cinema producer, Alfredo Cabrejo, who "sabía poner tentación en los oídos femeninos y estafar el amor como podía" (105). Indeed, he is a fraud who takes advantage of women who dream of becoming cinema stars. The fake producer takes advantage of Aurelia for he feels that "quien roba a la soberbia y a la ambición no roba nada" (113). The narrator agrees with the above statement and actually defines Alfredo as "el compensador del mundo" (113) for he actually defrauds the woman who is going to defraud him later offering her body empty of desire. According to the narrator, Aurelia deserves to be swindled for aspiring to be part of the highly selective world of Art in which only those with special talents may enter: "La vida entera se reía de aquel engaño que era la represalia del Arte ante la mujer que no es artista, que no tiene alma para ser

artista” (112). Aurelia thus is just another “cop[y] [of] a unique existence” another “product of mechanical reproduction [which] may not touch the actual work of art” (Benjamin, “The Work of Art” 734). By defining high art in such a manner, the narrator reveals an elitist attitude towards those women who are bad imitations of real actresses. In the narrator’s view, these actresses strip the art of interpretation of its “aura” (Benjamin, “The Work of Art” 734) and, because of such transgression, their bodies deserve to be punished and treated as mere commodities.

Although the narrator seems to agree with Alfredo’s treatment of the girl, he also presents the conman in negative terms—“fracasado de todas las cosas, amarillento y huesudo” or “lo que tenía de vomitado” (112)—showing his/her distance from the character. Such description brings to light the imperfections of this middle-class man who is defined as a “fracasado” or failure, as an unproductive and emaciated body whose frustrations about his lack of success—probably in the cinema industry—are expressed through his hostility for and sexual abuse of aspiring actresses, who mirror his own beginnings. Thus, Aurelia’s body serves as a recipient of Alfredo’s own self-hatred. For her part, Aurelia, dazzled with the prospect of fame and luxury in the world of spectacle—“deslumbrada hacia los focos de luz y esplendor” (112)—gives away her body as down payment to the “producer” who promises to launch her to stardom: “daba pedazos de su vida a crédito de lo que no iba a vivir, vestida con el traje de noche de la ilusión de ser estrella de cine” (114). However, when Alfredo disappears, Samuel and Aurelia’s dream of a future full of riches and fame in the world of cinema is destroyed. Samuel, realizing that Alfredo has also cheated him, projects his self-scorn against Aurelia, mirroring the same type of psychological mechanism that Alfredo used to

project his own self-loathing onto Aurelia's body: "Samuel quedó irritadísimo con aquella escaramuza del falso empresario de cine y condujo a Aurelia más abajo, como para vengar el que se hubiese dejado engañar" (115). To get revenge, Samuel takes her to the "Bar Crisantemo," a marginal space where Aurelia will not likely find a good client. It is here where the deceitful mirror—"espejo de la mentira" (113)—in which the girl saw herself reflected as a triumphant star shatters, simultaneously shattering the image that she had of Samuel in her mind: "La Nardo se dió allí cuenta de la bajeza de Samuel y le miraba a veces como si mirase en él a un explotador de raza amarilla" (115). Now, she fully realizes the pimp's objectification of her body, representing him as a trader of Oriental slaves or a "yellow" trader.

At the bar, Aurelia meets another client, Juanito Montero, who will also project onto her body his frustration with his own sexual impotence and low self-esteem. Juanito Montero is a skinny, rich middle-class young man who uses two phallic objects, a fountain pen and a syringe, to compensate for his lack of sexual potency and to possess Aurelia. With the fountain pen, Juanito has the power to sign checks that buy the prostitute's body. However, it is the syringe, the object that primarily allows him to construct himself as dominant and powerful before the girl, that works to obscure the fact that his body is emasculated and ugly. Thus, "guardaba una venganza de ser el ser débil, un misterio para acendrar su falta de encantos, una jeringuilla de plata y cristal que ofreció a Aurelia como una sutil llave de nuevos gozos" (117). By enticing Aurelia to take a shot of morphine and succumb to its effects, the male drug addict does not need to feel ashamed of himself and hide his shame behind his words: "No se apresuraba a decir palabras, no necesitaba aturdira como otras veces, estaba confiado y entronizado en el

sofá” (118). The penetration of the syringe into the girl’s flesh, a substitute for his phallus, gives Juanito confidence in his own masculinity that otherwise he lacks: “Él sonreía diez mil veces más orgulloso que nunca, . . . sin aquella inferioridad con que miraba ante la belleza maldita y victoriosa de Aurelia. El pobre flacucho, iracundo, maligno, con gestos de araña ya no temía su desproporción” (119). Again, the prostitute’s body functions as the receptor of men’s sense of inferiority and insecurities

On the other hand, Aurelia’s morphine consumption takes her to another level of consciousness. At the narrative level, when Aurelia is under the influence of the drug, the reader has access to her views towards her client: “La repugnancia del hombre lejano había desaparecido también y sólo veía una noche estrellada sobre un río que la reflejase íntegra en su fondo” (119). Morphine also allows her to experience her body as complete, giving her a feeling of wholeness. Nonetheless, such perceptions of herself are in fact a mere reflection or illusion, for it is her image reflected on the water that she sees in the delusion induced by the drug. In fact, her inner fragmentation and the denial of her own self is such that she needs to erase both body and mind from her consciousness:

“necesitaba borrarse por fuera con el baño y borrarse por dentro con la morfina” (126).

Drugs, therefore, allow her to elude her inner fragmentation, and because of this, she becomes an addicted “moridora” who now experiences “un desprecio letal a los bienes humanos” (122). For Samuel, Aurelia’s encounters with Juanito are economically rewarding for she does not keep any money for herself. On top of this, seeing Aurelia in such states of degradation helps Samuel relocate himself in a position of power, regaining confidence in his masculinity. For this reason, Samuel “[a]hora se sentía digno por lo que

la mujer que cae más bajo de lo que se piensa puede elevar al hombre que la ve caer” (122).

Aurelia’s self-degradation worsens as she continues working as a prostitute. Once she stops consuming morphine, her inability to escape from the awareness of her debasement leads her to despise herself even more. Her self-abjection is twofold: at one level, she feels stronger “en la disputa victoriosa contra la conciencia” (145) and at the other, she becomes more “female”: “hacía ejercicios de abyección para ser más hembra, . . . para merecer sin vergüenza los insultos de los hombres que así no tendrían la violencia con que estallaban en su corazón cuando siendo más pura se los oía lanzar” (148).

According to the narrator’s description, the more “woman” a woman is, the more sexual her female body becomes. From the narrator’s perspective, women are naturally anchored in the materiality of their bodies with no chance to escape it. In fact, it is not the first time that the narrator highlights the inseparability of the working-class woman and her body, constructing her as an atavistic and primitive being, unable to control her bodily instincts. For instance, while menstruating, Aurelia’s relationship with an old man stops. During the days that she has her period, Aurelia becomes extremely rebellious and uncontrollable, and she even threatens to kill her client with a knife. Obviously, in her rebellion, the narrator finds her “fascinadora,” a woman with a “belleza castigadora” (149-50). At the same time, though, the periodic return to what the narrator considers her instinctual nature allows her to come out of her mental lethargy and resist male domination. Such rebellion, notwithstanding, is stripped of serious consideration by the narrator who considers her fists as “locuras de venganzas incumplidas” (149), which places her in the realm of madness. At a different moment, the narrator, like a naturalist

writer, relates a particular physical trait of Aurelia's body to her lack of morality, as if her body could reflect her moral degradation: "se notaba en su labio inferior el rizo de la prostitución" (152).

The construction of Aurelia's working-class body as atavistic also leads to her portrayal as the embodiment of the Spanish capital, echoing *costumbrista* representations of working-class women. In *La Nardo*, Aurelia is "represented as the atavistic and authentic body of national tradition (inert, backward-looking, and natural), embodying nationalism's conservative principle of continuity" (McClintock, "No Longer" 92). Yet, in contrast to *género chico*, which casts sexually decent female characters as representative models of the nation, *La Nardo* proposes that the prostitute is the essence of Madrid's essence. Although Gómez de la Serna's novel rewrites the sexuality of the working-class woman imagined by *costumbrismo*, both literary constructions of the working-class female body as symbols of the national essence are founded on the same middle-class classist and sexist ideologies that cast working-class women as primitive, passionate and connected to their bodies. Symbolized as such, in *La Nardo* Aurelia represents the atavistic body of the nation: a nation of passion and desire which is directly put in contrast with a sexually repressive Spain. This idea is put forward by both the narrator and the male characters in the novel. For instance, for the narrator, Aurelia

[e]ra la heroína solitaria de una vida social que comete el crimen de retraerse, pero todos, por el contrario, la achacaban el crimen a ella. ¡A ella, que era de las pocas que facilitaban el vivir!

Luchaba contra todo el Madrid hundido y timorato, pero era más la reina de Madrid que las otras mujeres. . . . En Madrid, sólo estas bellezas

solitarias y dinásticas de cada cinco años, que transitan por las calles como arrojadas del Paraíso. Sólo se ve que *son el alma de Madrid*, al verlas una tarde entre las mujeres con velos o sombreritos negros que van como bajo soportales de sombra. (158 emphasis added)

From this masculinist perspective, the Madrilenian prostitute is the real essence of Madrid, especially when she is compared to middle-class women because the latter follow bourgeois norms of female behavior. While bourgeois women's sexuality remains repressed, symbolically represented by the hats and veils that cover their faces and heads, prostitutes break away from society's sexual repression making the enjoyment of sexual pleasure visible and public, for which they are socially ostracized. Certainly, the narrator, in his search for the fulfillment of his sexual fantasies, finds that the prostitute "[e]ra la mujer de placer [porque] lo que más difícilmente se encuentra es una mujer de placer" (159). Thus, the prostitute's body, and by extension, the working-class female body, serves as a space for the middle-class male to escape the repressive sexual norms of his own class. Idealized and utilized in this manner, the prostituted body of the working-class woman, perceived as a commodity on display in the Madrilenian urban landscape, becomes a "manipulable sign, so 'inflated' by illusion, appearance, and fantasy . . . that it ultimately relinquishes all but an arbitrary or imaginary connection to the body of the object" (Haug qtd. in Teal 84). Her body is emptied of any subjectivity and her work as a prostitute is conveniently concealed behind her commodification. Echoing the narrator's construction of Aurelia as a symbol of the Madrilenian essence, Rosell, a doctor and another of the prostitute's clients, also feels that through her he now possesses the spirit of the Spanish capital. In his opinion, others "[h]abían buscado por callejuelas inmundas

el alma de Madrid que sólo estaba en La Nardo” (128). The doctor believes that he is the only man who possesses her, a belief that infuses in him a sense of superiority over his male proletariat clients who, according to him, have not been so lucky as to find Madrid’s soul.

If Aurelia’s body represents Madrid’s essence and that same body is commodified, then it follows that nationhood becomes a kind of commodity that the male subject can access and consume through the prostitute’s body. This is particularly the case for Acisclo, a millionaire from Venezuela who returns to Madrid searching for his Spanish roots. For Acisclo, Aurelia embodies the spirit of the Spanish capital that he had imagined and desired: “encontraba en Aurelia la belleza que resumía la ciudad añorada” (170). Aurelia’s body, in fact, merges with the city itself in the eyes of the Venezuelan: “Eres tan la hembra madrileña, que cuando pienso en nuestros paseos no se si es melena tuya o de las tapias la yedra colgandera que hemos visto” (176). Once again, her body becomes a sign whose meaning is the projection of male desires and anxieties: “[Acisclo] había encontrado en ella la novia castiza de sus desesperaciones de español insatisfecho durante cientos de años” (172). The Venezuelan’s anxiety about his lack of a fixed national identity is fulfilled by his sexual relationship with Aurelia who epitomizes the *castizo* essence of Madrid. Furthermore, by describing Acisclo’s worries about his national identity in such a way, the narrator implies that all Americans with Spanish roots suffer from an insecure and unstable national identity because they always look at Spain as the referent, but a referent whose meaning is difficult to fix especially when the individual has been born on a different continent. Acisclo, on the other hand, has secured such meaning by his possession and consumption of Aurelia’s body. Indeed, fixing the

meaning of his own Spanishness is symbolically represented by locating Aurelia within an enclosed space where he can only access it: “el medio de conocer el alma madrileña, era poner casa a la mujer que resume las gracias castizas, escondiéndola más que mostrándosela al mundo” (172).

Another instance in which the working-class girl is configured as the embodiment of the Madrilenian spirit is at a beauty pageant. Samuel takes her to a Madrilenian *kermesse* or festival where he enters her into a pageant as a means of marketing her body to potential buyers. Without any doubt, the girl wins the competition being heralded as “representación de la belleza de Madrid” which for the narrator is comprised by “[una] síntesis de luna, sol y prostitución” (185). For the jury and for the narrator, Aurelia represents “the nationalism that is simultaneously invented and reflected within the beauty pageant” (Banet-Weiser 3). As Sarah Banet-Weiser explains, the beauty pageant is a “national phenomenon” that plays an important role in the definition and projection of nationalism (5). In her opinion, “[t]he performance of feminine subjectivity that comprises the . . . beauty pageant functions as national assurance that despite the threats posed to dominant culture by fluctuating racial[, class] and gender codes, the pageant successfully manages and disciplines the construction of national identity, femininity, and ethnicity” (10). Thus, if beauty pageants emerge as a means of containing and defining national femininity in times of crisis, the success of Aurelia, as a working-class girl, seems to relocate her uncontrollable working-class female body within the space of normativity and discipline. However, her victory at the contest indeed subverts the dominant perception of the ideal female citizen as sexually pure for her licentious moral

life cannot be perceived by the jury; the narrator sees through the performance and describes Aurelia's eyes as "macerados de perversión" (185).

As a result of the beauty contest, Aurelia finds another client, Federico, who represents the ideal of middle-class masculinity: "el caballero más formal del jurado" (185). When the two fall in love, Aurelia finally rejects her past life and subjugation to Samuel. Simultaneously, Federico leaves his family and his middle-class life to be with her. Overwhelmed by Samuel, on the one hand, and Federico's family on the other, both lovers decide to commit suicide with a morphine overdose. For Aurelia, the mutual suicide allows her to purge her past life while affirming her own worth by knowing that Federico has died for her: "Sentía la depuración del suicidio, el empeño de amor que había en él y como así no quedaría de ella aquella historia idiota de cuando perdió el corsé. [I]ba a sentir el homenaje mayor que puede recibir una mujer, el suicidio de un hombre, la sumisión en la muerte, el último placer en los placeres, el doble cero del amor" (197-8). Death, in this manner, is experienced by both lovers as a communion, the sacred bonding of the lovers' souls.

Ironically, though, what originally seems to be the end of Aurelia's subjugation to male domination through "el doble cero," or the death of two equals who mirror each other, actually confirms the idea that her body is a mere receptacle for bourgeois male anxieties. At some point in the lovers' mental trajectory toward their death, Federico becomes insecure and anxious about Aurelia's excessive body mobility: "Apretó su seno con fuerza y ella se inmutó desesperada. Surgieron en él unos celos violentos, al ver que estaba menos muerta de lo que esperaba, con respingo de hembra que aún puede volver al juego del amor" (205). Imagining that she might have chances to survive, he feels

mocked and deceived: “Le asustaba como la mayor burla de la vida la resurrección de la que había engañado a un hombre hasta llevarlo a la muerte” (206). In this fashion, the effects of morphine in his thoughts expose his insecurities and his need to control the rebellious and mobile female body. Fearful that Aurelia may be having sex with others, Federico attempts to dominate her to assert his sense of masculine worth. Federico mentally constructs Aurelia as an unfaithful and deceitful woman who will love others once he is dead. Notions of social respectability and public image, which inform this “caballero formal,” resurface on his deathbed. In fact, Federico “[n]o quería de ninguna manera que en las noticias apareciese el ‘se tiene esperanzas de salvarla’” (206), because her survival would have implied that his pathetic story—killing himself while the lover keeps on living—would have become public, placing him in a position of social mockery. Carried away by his jealousy, he gives her another shot of morphine. This is not enough, however, because “[viendo] que ella disfrutaba de la muerte” (206), he still feels jealous of her final bodily pleasures. Finally, he stabs her in the heart, making sure that she will not be able to survive and to ensure that her death is painful. Aurelia “se volvió espantada . . . de que la matase con crimen manifiesto [y] reconveniéndole por haber manchado el morir [,] entornó los ojos y su boca se torció en el rizo de los sueños” (207). Then, fearing that he could survive and be accused of manslaughter, he kills himself with another shot of morphine. Here, the commodification and subjugation of Aurelia as a mirror of male anxieties actually shapes both her life and her death. The only opportunity she has to regain a sense of worth after having become a prostitute is literally destroyed through Federico’s violence against her body. In her romantic relationship with Federico, her body, already outside the circuits of commodification, is violated by the

materialization of traditional male values of honor and public dignity. Aurelia, then, dies without being freed from male subjugation.

Still, the ending of the novel may also be implying that Aurelia and Federico were destroyed by the bourgeois society and its discourses on “love.” Because a love relationship between a prostitute and a middle-class man transgresses the moral codes of Madrilenian bourgeois society, it has to be eliminated. In this sense, the open ending of Pérez Galdós’s *Tormento* offers a less deterministic and conservative resolution to its narrative, for Tormento does not die but goes on to live abroad with her lover despite her transgression. Additionally, while Gómez de la Serna refuted the literary principles of realism/naturalism, Aurelia’s final fate, her death, is strongly determined from the beginning of the novel. The spatial transgression she carries out when lured away from the security of her home by the consumption of mass-produced novels and by her exposure to commodities determines her final fate. In this sense, the narrator’s opinion mirrors the author’s determination to destroy Aurelia’s character at the end of the novel: “[Rosell, otro cliente,] quería salvarla de la destrucción sin saber que *ese era su perfecto destino por cualquier camino que tomase*” (125). Thus, if Aurelia’s mother had not given her so much freedom—letting her be independent and mobile in the streets of Madrid,—the girl would have remained safe from the pernicious effects of a commodity economy and her fate would have been quite different. Such an idea is actually voiced by the people working at the Rastro, whose judgment confirms the “moral” of the novel. Thus, at the market, when the Rastro workers try to comfort Aurelia’s mother and discuss the girl’s abandonment of both her maternal home and her job at the stall, someone remarks: “Por dejar a esa chica sola en el puesto frente a tanta cosa repodría—decía la que adivina

lo que de más difícil alienta dentro de lo que sucede” (84). Aurelia’s exposure to commodities in the public space leads to her downfall. As in other works already studied, *La Nardo* also highlights the endurance of the nineteenth-century social belief that women’s free circulation in public spaces is directly connected with loose female sexuality. At the same time, if the prostitute represents the “tyranny of commerce and the universal domination of the cash nexus” of modern times (Felski, *Gender of Modernity* 19), Aurelia’s death can also be understood as the author’s desire to control and eliminate the modern processes of commodification that pollute the essence of Madrid.

Nonetheless, while Aurelia symbolizes the prostituted space of the Spanish capital, it is middle-class men who are actually destroying the nation’s being. The novel, thus, falls into “the temporal paradox of modernity” or the “use of archaic images to identify what was historically new about the ‘nature’ of commodities” (Benjamin qtd. in McClintock, “No Longer” 92). Aurelia, as a commodity, represents the new, the commodifying, constantly changing and discontinuous forces wrought by modernity. Conversely, she is also the archaic and permanent image of a past, the “necessary consequence” (Anderson qtd. in McClintock, “No Longer” 92) of the “novelty” in modernity. As McClintock has suggested, such temporal division required by the inner logic of modernity actually has gender implications. In her opinion, “the temporal anomaly within nationalism—veering between nostalgia and the impatient, progressive sloughing off of the past—is typically resolved by figuring the contradiction in the representation of time as a natural division of gender” (“No Longer” 92). Aurelia, seen as the “natural” woman, the working-class woman who can provide sexual pleasures free

from the stultifying norms of the middle class, represents that archaic, timeless nation where the narrator can temporarily take refuge from the chaos of the modern world.

In regards to the novel's simultaneous configuration of Aurelia as the archaic nation and as commodified body, I believe it is also important to acknowledge Gómez de la Serna's economic problems and nostalgia for the past when he wrote *La Nardo* not in Madrid, but in Paris. Rodolfo Cardona writes:

Success at first nodded to him in this city [Paris], where a posthumous work by Apollinaire had just appeared with a Foreword by Gómez de la Serna. Gradually his life grew quieter; the invitations were not as plentiful or as attractive as in former times. He felt lonely for his beloved Madrid and began to work on *La Nardo*, a novel where he expressed the soul of his native city. His financial situation was becoming serious. From time to time he would receive a few hundred francs or a few liras from more translations of his works. (41)

I think the reader can draw connections between the author's nostalgia for a less commodified society—such as the archaic Madrid,—and his realization of the unstoppable mercantilization of the city,—and by extension, of his own dependence on the commodification of his work. Aurelia's character, in fact, caught in the throes of a modernizing city might have been inspired by Gómez de la Serna's own emotional conflicts.

In conclusion, *La Nardo* explores the idea that women's desire for commodities, stimulated by the consumption of low-class culture, leads them to their own destruction. Gómez de la Serna's novel, written in 1930, confirms the prevalence of the nineteenth-

century notion of “*boyarismo*, [christened] after the heroine of Flaubert’s novel, [by which] female reading is frequently presented . . . as initiating a chain reaction, leading to buying too much [or desiring too many commodities] and then to sexual depravation” (Jagoe 94). According to the novel, by adopting the discourse of mercantilization and specularization of modern times, created to fulfill male desire, women are turned into commodities themselves. As a consequence, women become alienated from their own bodies and minds, which results in their fragmentation and final destruction. In this masculinist configuration of women’s desire,

[w]oman . . . is only a more or less obliging prop for the enactment of man’s fantasies. That she may find pleasure there in that role, by proxy, is possible, even certain. But such pleasure is above all a masochistic prostitution of her body to a desire that is not her own, and it leaves her in a familiar state of dependency upon man. (Irigaray 364)

Aurelia’s inscription within the phallogocentric space of modern consumption puts her “in the position of experiencing herself only fragmentarily, in the little-structured margins of a dominant ideology, as a waste, or excess, what is left of a mirror invested by the (masculine) ‘subject’ to reflect himself, to copy himself” (Irigaray 367).

On the other hand, contrary to the idea that Gómez de la Serna’s characters are “never allowed to be the gazing and questing subject” (Spires 220), Aurelia does have a gaze in *La Nardo*; however, Aurelia, as a dislocated subject, struggles to make sense of her fragmentation by and through a phallogocentric language that continuously relocates her as the repository of male desire. In this manner, it is important to remember that Aurelia’s body, constructed as the mirror of male anxieties and desires, is a working-class

female body. In fact, her trajectory in the novel is deeply conditioned not only by her sex, but especially by her social class. Aurelia's specularization by both male characters and the narrative voice indeed hints at the sexual construction of the working-class woman from a middle-class point of view as a highly desirable commodity, as a prop to reenact traditional gender and power structures.

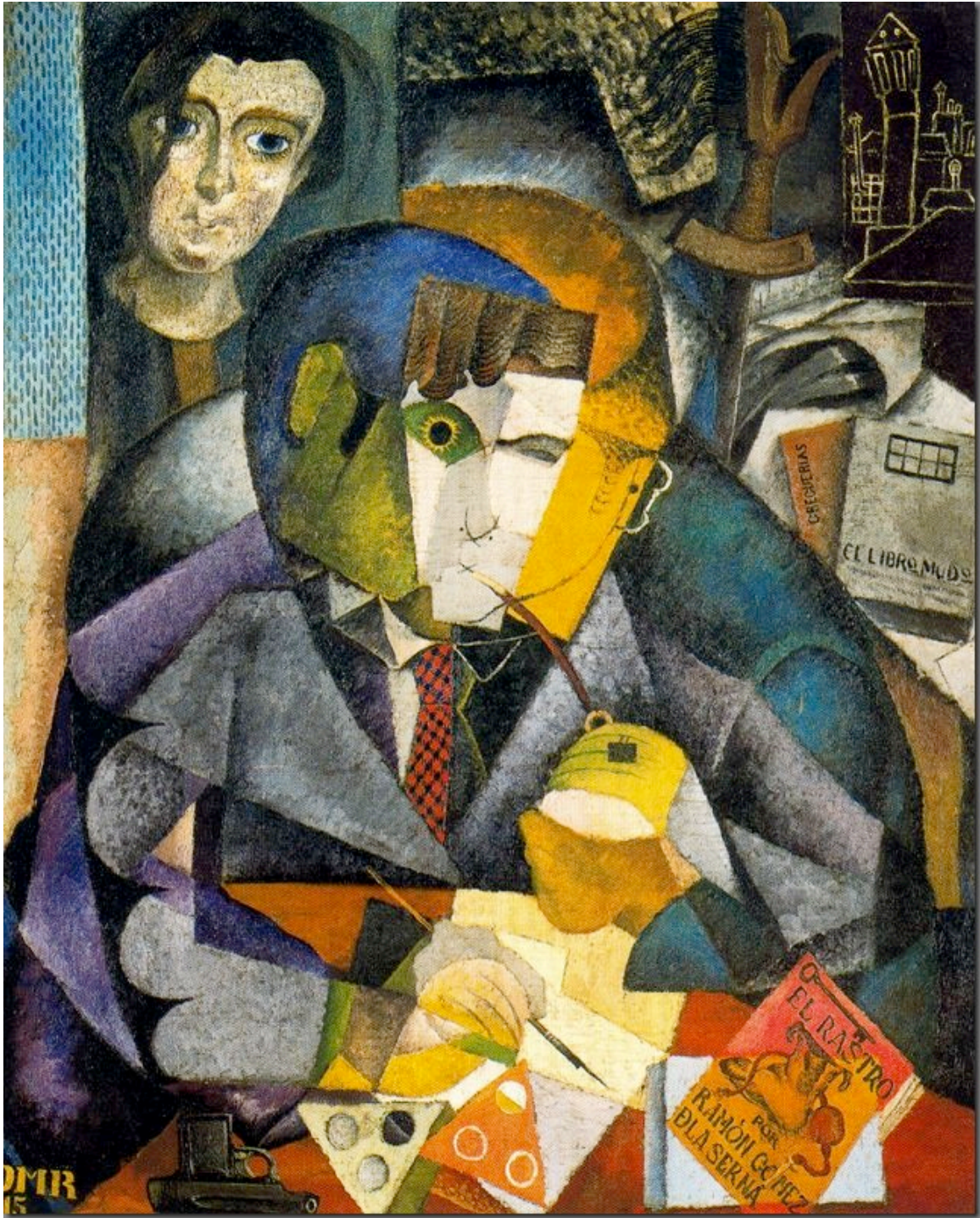


Figure 1

CONCLUSION

July 2, 1888. Luciana Porciana, a wealthy widow was found dead in her Madrilenian home at 109 Fuencarral Street. She had been brutally murdered—her body stabbed multiple times and later burned. In the adjacent room, her maid, Higinia Balaguer, and her bulldog lied unconscious. Both had been presumably drugged. Soon after the police arrived at the crime scene, Higinia was taken to jail as the main suspect of the assassination without definitive evidence. After a one-year trial and multiple contradictory confessions, the maid was finally garroted in public view.

Luciana Porciana's assassination became one of the most well-known and mass-mediated crimes in late nineteenth-century Spain. The case caused an uproar within Spanish society, capturing the attention of journalists and even professional writers like Benito Pérez Galdós. In fact, Galdós was so fascinated with the case, and particularly with the figure of Higinia Balaguer, that he dedicated his time to following the development of the trial. He attended all trial sessions, interviewed those who could provide him with additional information about the crime, and personally met and conversed with the main suspect, Higinia. Galdós's interest in the maid, as Alicia Andreu has noted, was awakened by her ability to manipulate her own discourse, unsettling the "true" meaning of any of her previous confessions (68). In addition, Higinia Balaguer's past life was obscure: she had been working for Luciana Porciana for a short period of time and there was little verifiable information about her previous life or how she had come to work for the wealthy upper-class woman. It was the difficulty of ascribing definite and secure meanings to the maid's identity and her discourse that at once captivated and repulsed both Galdós and public opinion. But why were the public and the

media so vested in deciphering this particular case and Higinia's personality when hundreds of other crimes occurred in Spain during this time? Why did the maid Higinia become such a symbolic public figure? To answer these questions, it is essential to understand the socio-economic contexts of turn-of-the-century Spain.

During the period of the Restoration and Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, Spanish society was involved in a hesitant modernization process. A newly emergent middle class fostering liberal capitalism and politics coexisted and clashed with the traditional social and ideological structures of the Old Regime. Cities became geographical landmarks where the struggles and confrontation of different social and political forces were staged. Masses of impoverished peasant migrants arrived on the urban scene and configured a new urban proletariat often living in poverty-stricken peripheral neighborhoods. Unemployment, terrible living and working conditions and anarchist and socialist philosophies contributed to the creation of a politicized working-class. Workers' public demonstrations, riots and strikes increased during these decades, instilling in the empowered oligarchy a sense of fear and rejection.

The "woman question" also gained special relevance in public debates in Spain. Modernization provided new models of femininity in a society increasingly based on a capitalist system of production and consumption. As gender and class boundaries were destabilized, the middle class ideal of the "angel of the hearth and home" emerged as a prescriptive interclass archetype of femininity. In fact, by constructing the "'home' as a woman's place" the middle class envisioned the domestic sphere "as a source of stability, reliability and authenticity" (Massey 180). Nonetheless, consumer culture gradually took hold of Spanish cities, transforming the urban landscape and encouraging women to

occupy public spaces as consumers. This phenomenon eroded the bourgeois divide between public and private space. Parks, department stores, museums, and eventually cinemas shaped the everyday practices of many, especially of a middle class increasingly interested in codifying its social status through visual display and consumption.

Because she abandoned the safeguard of the domestic sphere, the female shopper embodied contradictory discourses. At one level, she was expected to consume in order to fulfill her home and her family's necessities. At another level, she was perceived as dangerous for the family economy due to her supposedly uncontrollable habits of consumption. It does not come as a surprise then that the figure of the middle-class female kleptomaniac emerged and was subjected to social and scientific investigation and debate at this time (Spiekermann 135-59).

Along with female shoppers, urban working women also became visible in public discussions. Their entrance into the expanding labor market and their economic independence raised anxieties about the place these women should occupy in society. As Doreen Massey explains "the fact of women having access to an independent income was itself a source of anxiety" (179). The fact is that through their daily experiences of labor, leisure and consumption, working-class and middle-class female workers destabilized the spatial/ideological configuration of the "angel of the hearth and home" demonstrating that dominant constructions of gendered space were subject to contestation.

Turn-of-the-century cultural representations of working women fed into and interacted with contemporary middle-class discourses of gender, class and space. Anxieties about working-class and female disorder and dislocation were given narrative and visual form through cultural representations of the Spanish female worker. Thus, it is

not surprising that working-class Higinia Balaguer appeared in the press as the first suspect in the assassination of her upper middle-class employer. Described as an atavistic and animal-like woman by journalists and Galdós himself—(“mirar de ave de rapaña” qtd. in Andreu 67),—the maid Higinia Balaguer embodied the anxieties of a class that feared the dissolution of dominant hierarchical social and spatial boundaries at the hands of a rebellious working class. Furthermore, Higinia, as a domestic servant accused of killing her wealthy employer, represented middle-class anxieties regarding the threatening presence of the working class inside of the bourgeois home itself. Higinia embodied “the enemy at home,” the enemy that had symbolically profaned and destroyed the space on which bourgeois family life and identity was founded: the domestic sphere. As a result, Higinia Balaguer’s transgressive body, “dangerously” free to move between working-class spaces and middle-class interiors when she served as a maid, had to be contained, disciplined and eventually eliminated in public view.

The intricate representation of the urban working woman’s body as a symbol of sexual and social class difference was not a prerogative of the journalistic genre, but abounded in other cultural genres and trends. My dissertation demonstrates how three aesthetic and ideological movements— such as *costumbrismo*, realism, and avant-garde—construct characterizations of urban female workers in turn-of-the-century Spanish literature and culture as symbols of middle-class anxieties and desires as a reaction to experienced social and political instability in turn-of-the-century Spain. I contended that class is a decisive factor in the trajectory and final destiny of urban female worker characters in the literary and cultural representation of the time. What is more, since social relations create and define space (Doreen Massey 263), middle-class

representations of working women result from this class's particular conceptualization of class and gendered spaces. For that reason, my thesis draws a geography of urban female labor by analyzing the symbolic condensation of class, gender, and space through representations of urban working women. Hence, my dissertation brings to light the relations of power and domination that underlie the cultural construction of female workers and the contradictory and unstable character of middle-class identity.

Additionally, by locating the representation of urban female workers as the focus of my study, I intend to show the connections within cultural trends that critics usually study separately. If *zarzuela* working women characters embody anxieties about female dislocation and modernity, such as in the case of “Las cigarreras” or “La Gran Vía” as I show in chapter 1, the construction of the female protagonist of *La Nardo* also responds to similar concerns as explored in Chapter 3. Likewise, my work on the configuration of the female worker as producer and consumer—especially of mass culture—in both Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 highlights the ideological interrelation between the *zarzuela* “La suerte de Isabelita” and novels such as *La rampa* or *La Nardo*. Whereas feminist writers such as Emilia Pardo Bazán and Carmen de Burgos strive to make visible the hardships faced by working women in the city, the authors occasionally fall prey to the prejudices of their own social class as I show in both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. In a similar vein, my study of Galdós's *Tormento* in Chapter 2 concludes that while the novel makes visible the hardships that orphaned middle-class women suffer due to their lack of training to perform paid work, the novel's ironic narrator also presents a classist and masculinist view of working-class female characters like maids.

Through my analysis of the representation of urban female labor in turn-of-the-century Spanish literature and culture, I shed light on the ambivalent cultural location that working women have occupied in cultural representations of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Even though the construction and development of modern Spain cannot be understood without the participation of working women, this segment of the population has been “out of sight” and “out-of-place” for too long. It is my hope that this dissertation will return these literary and everyday-life figures to their legitimate place in critical discourse.

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